



PHD

**Significant others in problem-solving and policy analysis.**

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SIGNIFICANT OTHERS IN PROBLEM-SOLVING  
AND POLICY ANALYSIS.

submitted by S.C. Jones  
for the degree of Ph.D  
of the University of Bath.  
1982.

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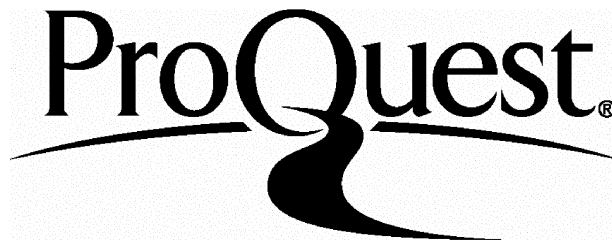
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## SUMMARY

The starting point for this research was the belief that there is an important gap in the theory and practice of problem-solving and policy analysis to do with the way in which decision-makers think about the other actors they define as significant in their complex policy problems. Within organizational worlds of complicated social relationships and the politics of policy-making it seems almost trivially obvious that other human beings will often be crucial content in a person's problem-construction. Yet although there is a vast body of social-psychological literature and theory about processes of 'person-perception', most of this is set outside the context of problem-solving and policy analysis, while the prevailing perspectives within this context ignore interpersonal and political processes altogether. In this thesis this research topic is explored within an action research study with two people concerned to tackle the problem of unemployment amongst the black youth of their area. A framework for theoretically understanding the process by which certain others are defined as significant in a complex problem, within the psychology of problem-construction, is described. This forms the background for exploring in more substantive detail the various bases by which others were defined as significant by the participants in this research, and their processes of explanatory and predictive 'modelling' of these others. A schema of categories of problem-significant others, grounded in their differentiations and categorizations, is developed, and some ideas about the implications of the findings for the practice of helping with the significant other content of policy analysis are offered.

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PART ONE :

INTRODUCTION.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### THE RESEARCH QUESTION

#### INTRODUCTION

The focus of the research described in this thesis is upon the way in which policy-makers in organizations, when facing what they define as a complex policy problem, think about those individuals or groups they regard as significant in it. For example, how is it, and on what bases, does a policy-maker come to define some particular actors as significant in his policy problem and not others? What is it he pays attention to in these significant others? What meanings does he assign to their attitudes and actions? How does he categorize them? How does he explain and predict these others, and in what way do these explanations and predictions affect his own attitudes and actions towards them?

The impetus for this enquiry comes from my belief that there is an important gap in the theory and techniques of problem-solving and policy analysis, to do with the psychological processes of 'other-definition' by decision-makers in organizations. There is a growing body of literature which argues that the policy-making process in organizations is a political one, involving such activities as negotiation, bargaining, agenda-writing and the "mobilisation of bias" (Schattschneider, 1960, p.71). This 'political' model suggests that a great deal of a person's thinking and acting around his policy problems will centre on other actors in his organizational world. Yet much of the theoretical discussion within this perspective is at the level of the 'broad brush stroke' rather than involving analyses of an

individual's processes of thinking about others within the psychology of problem-solving and policy analysis. Furthermore, at the level of practice, most of the prescriptions and techniques for problem-solving and policy analysis ignore the political and inter-personal aspects of problems altogether, even when their existence as a 'reality' of policy making has been explicitly acknowledged. Thus policy-makers are given no assistance with what it is almost trivially obvious to assert is likely to be an important, sometimes the most important, part of their thinking about their policy problems.

It is with the elaboration of this argument that the rest of this chapter is concerned: an examination of the prevailing perspective in problem-solving and policy analysis as the background within which this research is set; an explanation for why this perspective is often unhelpful in the world of organizations as most of us know it; and with this, also an explanation for why the research topic seems to be of some significance.

#### OBJECTIVITY, ORGANIZATIONAL RATIONALITY AND CONSENSUS

As Bernard Taylor(1977a) points out,"To read books and journals on planning, one might think that it is a rational activity proceeding by logical scientific analysis from the setting of objectives, through the appraisal of the firm and the environment, to the evaluation of alternative strategies against defined criteria and the establishing of action programmes and budgets that are monitored and controlled on a regular basis."(p.295) We can add to this that the world of planning and problem-solving, as it is typically 'writ', is

a world of objectivities and relative harmony in an organization frequently treated as a single 'Rational Actor' (Allison, 1971), where rationality is, to use Regan's (1978) distinction "organizational" rather than "personal" rationality; "A person's own goals may not be entirely consonant with the goals of the organization for which he works. His activities may therefore be rational in terms of the one yet irrational in terms of the other."(p.84)

(i) Problems and the 'Facts of the Matter'

The notion that proper and effective problem-solving and policy analysis depends on discovering the 'facts of the matter', about which most sensible people would agree, is a pervasive one. Thus for example Bernard Taylor (1977b) asserts that what is needed in planning "...in practice, is a consciously systematic approach that reflects a determination to start from first principles, to take decisions on the basis of facts, and to test the plan or hypothesis in action"(p.3)

In a similar vein, Derek Taylor ( 1979) argues that;

"... plans must be based on a realistic appraisal of the company's existing business situation rather than on one coloured excessively by the past experiences of the key power groups. Hence the initial fact-finding aimed at determining the company's existing strategic position should be organized and conducted in a way which positively promotes an open-minded yet fairly exhaustive appraisal of the situation." (p. 47)

Within this perspective, discovering the facts of the matter is commonly regarded as an essential prerequisite to discovering the 'real' or 'right' problem. Thus, for example Snee Smith (1971) asserts that, " The first essential in problem-solving is an appreciation of the true position, not as it appears to be, but as it really is."(p.102)



Cornell (1980) makes a similar proposal when he suggests that one of the first questions a decision maker should ask of a consultant's problem-solving efforts is, "Is the problem stated the real problem?...Are the facts stated correctly?" (p.105) The dependence of right or wrong problem definition upon the objectivity of the facts is also argued for by Schellenberger and Boseman (1978): "The first step in problem-solving is to have a complete grasp of the situation, including all the salient facts and information...Problem identification based on inadequate information or insufficient facts is frequently erroneous." (p.111)

As Eden and Sims (1979) point out about notions of real or right problems;

" In this way we are led to believe in the reality of an objectively defined problem which is assumed to be self-evident to all intelligent people; those who do not see the facts of the matter are therefore regarded as recalcitrant." (p.120)

The unhelpfulness of this as a stance on the nature of problems is something that will be returned to later.

#### (ii) A Single Rational Actor

In his book 'Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis' (1971) Allison examines three conceptual models which might be used to explain American policies during the Cuban Missile crisis. One of these models, which he argues dominates much of the thinking of both laymen and policy analysts about policy-making in government, is what he calls the "Rational Actor" model.

"What is striking about these examples from the literature of foreign policy and international relations are the similarities among analysts : of various styles when they are called upon to produce explanations. Each assumes that what must be explained is an action, i.e, behavior

that reflects purpose or intention. Each assumes that the actor is a national government. Each assumes that the action is chosen as a calculated solution to a strategic problem. For each, explanation consists of showing what goal the government was pursuing when it acted and how the action was a reasonable choice, given the nation's objective. This cluster of assumptions characterises the Rational Actor Model. ... in spite of considerable differences in emphasis and focus, most contemporary analysts (as well as laymen) proceed predominantly - albeit most often implicitly - in terms of this framework when trying to explain international events." (p.13)

Allisons's arena of interest is national government, but the 'Rational Actor Model' is equally influential in the literature about business organizations, and particularly in prescriptions about how organizational policy, or strategic planning, ought to be carried out. (e.g, Ansoff, 1965, 1979, Steiner, 1969, Andrews, 1971, Ansoff, Declerck and Hayes, 1976, Schellenberger and Boseman, 1978, Hussey, 1979). Thus, for example, Argenti (1980) proposes that:

"An objective is an aim, goal, mission or task. It is something that someone wants to achieve. It is an end, not a means. If this is the meaning of the word "objective", it follows that a corporate objective is the aim, goal, mission or task for a corporate body, such as a company, a charity, a club, a government or any other organisational entity.

A corporate objective is therefore the concept that validates the entire organisation and every action that it takes. Only if the objectives for a given organisation are known can it be judged whether the actions that it takes are wise or foolish, appropriate or misguided.

Only if the objectives are known can it be judged whether a given organisation is successful or failing, desirable or undesirable, laudible or contemptible. The corporate objective, then, is the criterion, the touch-stone, the yardstick by which everything concerning the company is judged. It is the purpose, the raison d'etre, the justification for its very existence. Some people do in fact call it the corporate purpose." (pp.34-35)

It is a single rational actor model which underlies Ansoff's (1979) assertion that, "...the overall task of strategic

management is to bring organizational rationality to the behavior of an E.S.O (Environment-Serving-Organization)"(p.129) While he does not ignore issues of power and politics as having an impact on the objectives of the E.S.O, the resolution of any conflict appears to be seen as relatively unproblematic. Furthermore, he makes a clear distinction between "political influence" and "strategic leadership":

"The key difference between political influence and strategic leadership is that the former calls primarily for exercise of political skills on behalf of a constituency, while the latter, in addition to political skills, requires a clear perception of the common purposes of an organization and of ways to attain them. It is common to refer to such perception as the 'vision' of the organization's future." (p. 129)

That the "vision of the organization's future" might not be self-evident and is unlikely to be easily divorcable from the different perspectives, as well as different concerns, of various constituencies is a question that is not seriously addressed.

Although Schellenberger and Boseman (1978) suggest that the objectives within a person's problem situation will depend on the standpoint from which it is viewed, they also unhesitatingly refer to the need in corporate planning to pay attention to the corporate objectives, and as if the discovering or agreeing what these are is likely to be relatively self-evident and non-problematic:

"One must get a clearer understanding of the objectives. The form of the objectives depends on the perspective from which a problem is viewed. If one is acting as an individual, it is the individual's objectives that are important; if one is acting as a supervisor, it is the objectives of the unit being supervised; if one is acting for the organization as a whole, it is the organization's objectives. The inexperienced problem-solver will frequently attempt to identify a problem without knowing the objectives of the organization." (pp 111-112)

A DIVORCE BETWEEN DESCRIPTION AND PRESCRIPTION

Ansoff's recognition of 'influential constituences', albeit those whose interests can be reconciled, and above which the strategic manager must rise, reflects the widely held notion in the literature of planning and policy making, of the 'stakeholder thesis'. This suggests that the power to influence the policies in organizations is typically distributed among several groups both outside and inside the organization, such as trade unions, customers, suppliers, employees, and so on, (e.g., Child, 1969, Thomas, 1976, Ackoff, 1979).

Not too distant from the stakeholder thesis is the body of literature and research which asserts that planning in organizations does not take place in accordance with a rational-comprehensive model, consensually or harmoniously by a management body which can, therefore be usefully treated as a single rational actor; but rather by political processes among different groups and individuals with often conflicting goals. (e.g, March and Simon, 1958, Cyert and March, 1963, Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963, Bailey, 1969, Allison, 1971, Pettigrew, 1973, 1977, Mangham, 1979, Bacharach and Lawler, 1980)

We cannot suppose that those who insist on the approach to planning and problem solving described above are unaware of this literature or indeed of the political 'realities' of the organizations they work in and around. Rather, there seems to be a schism between a descriptive understanding of how policy-making in organizations does occur, and a prescriptive theory about how it should occur. In the latter there is little or no place for subjectivity, major conflicts

of perspectives and values, or indeed people as individuals.

Why should this be? Firstly, it may be the consequence of adherence to norms which proscribe such aspects as somehow illegitimate. Thus, for example, although it is widely acknowledged that internal politics are a pervasive feature of organizational life, it is also widely held that that they are not legitimate content for explicit discussion, except with close colleagues and friends. Thus, as Burns (1966) points out:

'Normally each side in any conflict called "political" by observers claims to speak in the interests of the organization as a whole. Indeed, the only feasible way of advancing sectional interests is to present them in terms of improved welfare or efficiency, or as contributing to the organization's capacity to perform its tasks and to prosper.' (p. 166; see also Edelman, 1964, Bailey, 1969, Hall, 1972)

Another possible reason for not regarding subjectivity, idiosyncrasy, and internal political concerns as suitable content for problem-solving and policy analysis methods may be the recognition that paying explicit attention to them could add significantly to the complexity of the process, particularly if it is undertaken by a group. While arguing for the importance of taking account of individual definitions of problems within a team, Eden, Jones, Sims and Smithin, (1981) point out how doing so may lead to overt conflict and even "team destruction":

"...perhaps the most significantly problematic outcome for members of teams who have a belief that they should, and can, work together through negotiation is a possible discovery that they have sets of beliefs and values that are irreconcilable, not over one issue alone, but all-pervasively." (p. 44)

Thus at least some of the authors cited above may be reluctant to bring attention to factors which might lead to a breakdown of the systematic and harmonious process they are

attempting to promote. Where subjectivity, idiosyncrasy, and major conflicts of values remain unexplored and latent, and the rhetoric of planning and problem-solving stresses consensuality, and organizational rationality, such a process may be progressed, it is hoped, in the desired direction.

For consensuality and harmony, as essential ingredients of organizational rationality, are what is being promoted by a great deal of the problem-solving and policy literature, and at this point it seems important to move away from notions of norms or 'scripts', rhetoric, and so on. We cannot assume that many of those who write about the necessity for agreeing upon the 'common purpose' of the organization do not believe that there are such things. We can also suppose that many of them do believe that the view of the common purpose is likely to be shared by many right-minded people.

We can return here to the pervasive notion of objectivity discussed earlier. For what seems to underlie many of the prescriptions about problem-solving and policy-making is a particular 'science-rational' objectivated view of the world, in which, while there may be disagreements about purposes, nevertheless most sensible people would agree about the meaning and significance of the facts; indeed, once exposed to the facts, the common purposes of the organization are likely to become self-evident. It is a view of the world which is described by Vickers (1978) as follows: "For centuries it has been a central faith of science that a belief, however widely held, may be wrong and may be shown to be wrong by a single dissentent who appeals successfully to the 'facts'." (p12) Within this

standpoint, internal politics can be viewed as the recalcitrant pursuit of self-interest by people who are perfectly aware of 'what is' and what, therefore 'should be', rather than as the possible consequence of significantly different perspectives on reality and with these some irreconcilable beliefs and values about both ends and means. And in this way the apparent schism between description and prescription may not be as great as it first seems.

### SUBJECTIVITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

#### (i) Problems as Personal Constructions

In this thesis the view is taken that problems are not entities inhering objectively in situations, to be discovered by examining the facts of the matter, but rather are the personal constructions people place on events. As Eden and Sims (1979) assert:

"..the event 'shop steward calls strike meeting' may be an event about which we all know, however for the purpose of understanding the nature of problems we need to discover how this event is interpreted. A consultant may define a problem based on an interpretation as the predicted consequence of a poor incentive scheme, the managing director sees it as a storm in a tea cup and of no real consequence, to the industrial relations director it is the possibility of his being replaced, and to the local district union official it is the shop steward asserting his authority so that he may take over as district organiser.!. Such discrepancies in the way that problems are described may be attributed to wilful misrepresentation, but we believe that some discrepancy of this kind is the natural result of the cognitive process." (pp120-121)

Theoretically this view derives from a phenomenological model of man as one who selectively and subjectively constructs his reality by bringing to bear on situations a personal mental framework, or schemata, with which he builds their meaning and significance for himself. (e.g. Kelly, 1955, Schutz, 1970, Silverman, 1970, Neisser, 1976). It is a perspective which is captured by Thomas and Thomas' (1928) concept

of the 'definition of the situation', whereby " If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (p. 572). As Ball (1972) states:

"..what Thomas is basically arguing here and in other works is that...in order to understand social conduct we must look to existential causality, that is to the meaning of situations and the situated meanings within them as they are phenomenologically experienced by the actors located within them...Thomas did not view the situation and its definition simply as some kind of summated whole of place, setting, occasion, and cast, i.e., as a mere environment, either physical or social, to be experienced as a given. He viewed situations, to use Berger and Luckmann's terminology (1966), as 'constructions of reality', effected by self-determining actors selectively responding to the multiplicities of available cues." (pp62-63)

#### (ii) The Politics of Policy Making.

As Ball also asserts, Thomas and Thomas' concept of the definition of the situation seems "eminently commonsensical". even if its implications are often ignored. It is what is being suggested in such sayings as ' One man's meat is another man's poison' or 'Beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. It also seems eminently commonsensical to those of us who work in around organizations that internal politics, as "the tactical use of power to retain or obtain control of real or symbolic resources....are a basic reality of organizational life." (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980, pp1-2). Bacharach and Lawler argue that:

"Organizations are neither the rational, harmonious entities celebrated in managerial theory, nor the arenas of apocalyptic class conflict projected by Marxists. Rather, it may be argued, a more suitable notion lies somewhere between those two-a concept of organizations as politically negotiated orders. Adopting this view, we can observe organizational actors in their daily transactions perpetually bargaining, repeatedly forming and reforming coalitions, and constantly availing themselves of influence tactics...Survival in an organization is a political act. Corporations, universities, and voluntary associations are arenas for daily political action....What we saw on



the television screen during the Watergate hearings, for better or worse, told us more about organizational reality than all the theses and academic articles that have been published since 1972...Machinations of this type-although not necessarily corrupt ones, like those-were, and are, a basic reality of organizational life" (pp1-2)

Within the context of commercial organizations we can also suggest that the much publicised boardroom battles surrounding such figures as Tiny Rowland, Sir Hugh Fraser, Peter Cadbury, Lew Grade, are almost as revealing. What Allison has to say about policy-making in government is equally relevant to other organizations.

"The leaders who sit on top of organizations are not a monolithic group. Rather each individual in this group is, in his own right, a player in a central, competitive game. The name of the game is politics...the..Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players; players who act in terms of no consistent set of strategic objectives but rather according to various conceptions of national, organizational, and personal goals; players who make decisions not by a single, rational choice but by the pushing and hauling that is politics." (1971, p.144)

It is, of course, not only those who sit at "the top of organizations" who are involved in political behaviour, in the various "intricate and subtle, simultaneous, overlapping games" (ibid, p.162) that occur within and between different groups in different parts of the organization. And just as there seems to be a significant relation between a 'science-rational' perspective on reality, and an emphasis on harmony and organizational rationality, so there is a significant relation between a perspective that emphasises constructions of reality, and a view of policy making in organizations as importantly involving political processes. Thus we have argued elsewhere (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1982);

"That we are prepared to make so many assertions about the (political) nature of organizational life is because we believe that they are well founded in our own experience and the experience of others. Theoretically too, whether seeking to influence the affairs of men according to his own conception of what is right and best, or to defend his own freedom of action within a fairly limited area of influence, or to obtain the social and material rewards of particular positions, the individual who engages in organizational politics does so because he is a human being with his own goals, objectives, personal frame of reference. It is this 'individualistic' model of man which allows us to make certain generalizations about the pervasive nature of organizational politics. (p.1.7)

#### THE REASON FOR RESEARCH

If organizational politics are an integral aspect of policy making in organizations, then we could expect that they feature in some way in the content of a person's problem construction. It is in this way that the research question of how policy-makers in organizations think about their 'problem-significant' others becomes relevant. As Lippmann (1913) asserts, "To talk about politics without reference to human beings is...just the deepest error in our political thinking." (p.2). Thus it is that most of the questions which Allison suggests an analyst will need to ask himself in understanding the emergence of policies in an organization centre around the key 'players' involved. He suggests that an analyst should ask himself: Who are the 'players' whose interests and actions have a significant impact on the decisions made?; What are the positions held by the players which define the 'advantages and handicaps' in, and possibilities of access, to various games?; What are the players' 'stakes and stands' in terms of goals and interests, parochial priorities and perceptions, personalities, and deadlines

forcing issues to their attention?; What are the 'action channels' or regularized procedures which structure the game in terms of the selection of players?; What is a player's power that determines his impact on events?

Whether or not a policy maker also asks himself some or all of these questions, we could expect him to develop and use some internal 'model' of the politics of his organization and the actors within it; for example, in assessing the political feasibility of his policy proposals. We could expect him to be involved in some process of attributing meaning and significance to the attitudes and actions of others, perhaps attempting to understand how those others construe the situation he is concerned about, making predictions about how they might respond to his own actions, using his knowledge and models of them to attempt to persuade them to hold the definition of the situation he wants them to hold.

It is in this arena that there is currently a dearth of theory. As I have shown, the prevailing literature on problem-solving and policy analysis ignores this aspect of the process altogether. On the other hand, most of that which does propound a political view of policy-making in organizations does not offer a detailed theoretical analysis of psychological processes of thinking about others in the context of problem construction. We do not know, except in a relatively intuitive way, how it is, and indeed whether, a policy-maker comes to ask himself the kinds of questions outlined by Allison. There is, of course, a vast social-psychological literature which bears directly or indirectly on the way in which individuals think about

others. Most of it, however, is set outside the context of problem-solving and policy analysis. This does not mean that some of it would not be entirely relevant to this research, but a perspective which pays attention to the contextual nature of constructions of reality, through notions of "situated meanings", suggests that this relevance remains an open question.

The interest of the research topic is not merely theoretical  
We have argued that :

"..the most important single contributory factor in explaining the high level of disillusionment with policy analysis as evidenced by the studies of Brewer..is the result of client and consultant apparently declaring and working on a problem that neither wishes to solve, for neither owns the problem...We see the failure to negotiate a mutually-owned problem as particularly explained by the extent to which the problem defined for policy analysis ignores a body of data of whose existence many good policy analysts are aware but which has seldom been explicitly acknowledged and regarded as legitimate data to bring in to the process of policy analysis, namely the political reality of the organisational environment that the client must mobilise and manipulate...We believe...that it is crucial for the analyst to gain some explicit understanding of the client's reality if he is to aid the client with systematic analysis that is relevant to to the client's unique perspective and concerns." ( Jones, Eden and Sims, 1979, pp 146-149)

There is currently, alongside the lack of theory, a notable lack of techniques and approaches which can assist with "systematic analysis" of the significant other content of a persons policy problem, In this way policy-makers do not have tools available to them to help with what is likely to be defined by them as at least one important part of their problem-reality. The analysis of options method (Radford, 1977, 1980) and hypergame analysis (Bennett and Dando, 1979, Bennett and Huxham, 1982) are both game-theoretic methods intended to offer explicit tools to aid problem solving in conflict situations, through considering different scenarios, or games, in terms of the players, their

preferences, and likely strategies. However, in both cases, analysis is primarily to the relationship between 'the' organization, or some group of top management treated as a single reified actor, and other outside groups, also reified for the purpose of analysis. Intra and inter group differences and power conflicts within the organization are typically ignored. Little assistance is given to the crucial process of defining the problem from whence the choice of relevant actors derives, and that there may be different perceptions of who the significant participants are, and why, and what their strategies and preferences might be, is not attended to.

Not everyone, even when facing a policy problem with a considerable complexity of internal political content will want assistance with considering the others they define as significant, just as there will be client-consultancy situations in which it will be inappropriate to address such content explicitly. Nevertheless, some policy-makers in certain situations they find complex and problematic, may seek, and find helpful, methods which facilitate them making explicit, structuring and analysing their own knowledge and thinking about their problem-significant others.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that;

"The interrelated jobs of theory in sociology are:  
(1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior;  
(2) to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology;  
(3) to be usable in practical application-prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; and  
(5) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior" (p.3)

It was hoped that research into this topic would contribute to theory in a relatively unexplored area; thus offer some

perspectives-an explanatory and predictive stance towards data- about the way in which policy-makers think about their problem-significant others; which might also be usable for further research; and in the practical life of some individuals in some organizations.

PART TWO:  
METHODOLOGY.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### AN ACTION RESEARCH SETTING

As Trow (1970) observes "... different kinds of information about man and society are gathered most fully and economically in different ways, and ... the problem under investigation properly dictates the methods of investigation " (p.143).

In this research the "method of investigation" was that of in-depth qualitative involvement through action research. This chapter will explore the reasons for this choice. It will discuss the criteria that I used in considering the choice of method; the reasons why certain other much-used methodologies were rejected as not meeting these criteria; describe the research setting; and elaborate the particular features of the action research project that seemed to me to make it an appropriate methodology for the topic and data under investigation, which may not have fully met all the criteria of importance to me, but did so substantially.

#### CRITERIA FOR A METHOD

There were several criteria that seemed to be important in deciding upon an appropriate methodology for this research, all of which are interrelated but nevertheless are capable of being distinguished for the purposes of exposition.

##### (1) Appropriateness to the Topic

Firstly, the methodology required to be appropriate for learning about the research topic. This was how individuals



considering a complex policy problem think about the other individuals or groups they see as significant in their problem. Thus the method should ensure that any discussion of significant others by participants in the research was set within, rather than treated as discretely separable from, the contextual framework of particular complex problem situations. The method should also be one in which participants in research should feel able, as far as possible, to talk freely about this aspect of their lives, at least some of which might be expected to involve data regarded as potentially threatening, illegitimate or in some other way sensitive to reveal.

### (ii) The Development of Grounded Theory

While the literature and theory about human relationships is vast, that which is specifically to do with thinking about others in the context of problem-solving and policy analysis is not. Thus the method should be one which enabled the generation of theory, rather than be one concerned primarily with theory verification.

Furthermore, the kind of theory I wanted to develop was what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call "grounded theory". Glaser and Strauss (see also Blumer, 1969, Lofland, 1976) are troubled by research which involves forcing data into categories and concepts of the researcher. They suggest that research can and should be used to generate grounded theory which 'fits' and 'works' because it is derived from the categories and concepts of the people themselves in a

particular area of study rather than logico-deductively forcing data within prior assumptions, hypotheses and operational definitions.

A similar approach as that of Diesing (1972) who argues that:

"The concepts used must be relatively concrete and particularized, close to the real system being described, rather than abstract mathematical concepts developed in some other science and imposed on the subject matter a priori or concepts that grow out of a testing instrument and get their meaning from the instrument. As many of the concepts as possible should be derived from the subject matter itself, from the thinking of the people being studied; and the other concepts should at least not be foreign to their way of thinking." (p. 139)

To be interested in developing grounded theory which is derived from the theories that individuals themselves use for their thinking and acting in their everyday world, rather than pre-programming data within the preconceptions of the researcher, does not mean that there is no possibility of discovering some patterns, regularities, generalities in and about some parts of the social world. Rather, as Ball(1972) asserts:

"To take situational definitions as problematic rather than given is not to rule out, a priori, their possibly systematic nature; rather it is to rule out the given, that a priori, they are systematic." (p.71)

Nor does the development of grounded theory require the abandonment of existing theory, nor preclude asking the question: "Do these theories and concepts which derive from other contexts appear to 'work', or not, as a basis for understanding, explanation and prediction in this different

context?" Rather that existing theory has to "earn" its role in the grounded theory of the topic under study. As Glaser (1978) argues:

"... many existing categories fit the data. We do not have to discard all new categories nor ignore all categories in the literature in order to generate grounded theory. The task is rather to develop an emergent fit between the data and a pre-existent category, as data emerges so must an extant category be carefully fitted as data emerges to see if it works. In the bargain, like the generated category, it may be modified to fit and work. In this sense the extant category was not merely borrowed, but earned its way into the emerging theory." (p. 4)

However, Glaser and Strauss' formulation of the idea of grounded theory does tend to assume that theory will 'emerge' from data rather than come from the interpretation of data by a researcher. A reflexive feature of a phenomenological model of man is that a researcher also gives meaning to what he or she sees and hears, that the research is not a 'tabula rasa' and that there is no such activity as presuppositionless research. As Kaplan (1964) argues:

"We always know something already, and this knowledge is intimately involved in what we come to know next, whether by observation or in any other way. We see what we expect to see, what we believe we have reason of seeing, ... An observation is made; it is the product of an active choice, not of a passive exposure. Observing is goal-directed behavior; an observational report is significant on the basis of a presumed relation to the goal." (p. 133)

Yet to acknowledge the existence of a process of interpretation by a researcher, within the framework of his or her "prior scheme" (Blumer, 1970a) does not imply the impossibility of obtaining a reasonably close understanding of another's construction of his world. What is required is a theoretic stance which self-consciously

seeks to suspend assumptions about shared meanings and significance and explores the others' meanings in ways, and in contexts that do not rigidly prestructure the direction of learning. The researcher may then wish to give meaning to the others' meanings within the context of his own, or his audiences', different frameworks. As Kaplan (op.cit) argues:

"When a behavioral scientist is said to 'understand' a political event, a culture pattern, or a neurotic symptom, say, two things are involved. First, he has interpreted certain movements as having a particular meaning for the actors: marking the ballot was a vote, bowing was a gesture of deference, washing the hands was a ritual of purification. Here he has reconstructed an act of meaning, and his reconstruction has provided him with the subject-matter for his theorising. But second, he interprets the vote as a resurgence of nationalism, the gesture as a recognition of membership in the leisure class, or the ritual as an obsessive symptom of a compulsion neurosis. These meanings are for the observer, not for the actor, and are not to be confused with the observers hypothesis as to the meaning for the actor." (p. 140)

This 'second level' of theorizing should still be derived from and linked to the empirical world it is intended to illuminate. As Lofland (1976) suggests, "An empirical science is constructed ... out of the interplay of data and perplexed perception that gives rise to concepts yet contains and constrains them by a context of concrete empirical materials". (p. 11)

### (iii) A Longitudinal Study

The concern with the development of grounded theory about a topic which might involve some potentially sensitive data also led to a third requirement, that the method should allow for a longitudinal study. A longitudinal study might enable me to develop a relationship with any research participants where they they could come to trust

me sufficiently to believe that talking about their significant others within their complex problems would not have damaging consequences for them. It might also enable me to develop a relationship with them in which they could regard a detailed discussion of particular individuals and groups as a meaningful, rather than strange, activity; such as that of talking to a stranger about some other persons whom it is known the stranger will never meet and whose activities, it is believed, are likely to be of marginal interest or at best a matter of curiosity rather than personal significance.

Thirdly, it seemed to me that I would be more likely to develop what Lofland (1976) has called an "intimate familiarity" with the problem-reality constructed by the research participants which would enable an understanding of its complexity, its "real consequences" for action or inaction, and its changing nature in the light of those actions, through a longitudinal study. Lofland argues that without this intimate familiarity it is all too easy for the researcher to impose his own a priori conceptions on the world and meanings of those whose life is being investigated. He also argues that without this intimate familiarity the analysis and theories of the researcher are prone to be what he calls "ethereal and empty".

"Vast portions of current social science speak generally of social life or even of some particular social life in terms that have a highly indefinite relation to any actual, on-going, empirical world ... It is exactly their empty and malleable character that allows such concepts to survive in endless exegetical debate and speculation about empirical referents. But such are the activities of metaphysics, not science. An empirical science is constructed, rather, out of the interplay of data and perplexed perception that gives rise to concepts yet contains and constrains them by a context of concrete empirical materials." (p. 11)

As Hinde (1979) has pointed out, even within the vast body of social-psychological literature set outside the context of problem-solving and policy analysis, there is a dearth of theory based on empirical studies of longitudinal relationships, as opposed to 'one-off' interactions. While a policy-maker might think about people he is yet to meet, or just met and not to be seen again, we would expect him also to be embedded in a network of relationships that have a past and a future. This past and future is likely to have some implications for the relationship between explanation and prediction for him, including his evaluations of the consequences of actions to solve his current issue on possible future arenas, within the "intricate and subtle, simultaneous, overlapping games" of organizational life (Allison, 1971, p.162). We would also expect that within relationships a person's constructions of others will develop and change in the light of new knowledge, interests and reinterpretations of history. Thus fourthly, for theory development, I wanted to undertake a longitudinal study which might increase understanding of processes such as these.

(iv) Relevance and Usefulness Beyond the Specific Setting.

The assertion that there is nothing as practical as 'good' has attained the status of a truism. Nevertheless, the practical implications of research into this topic were extremely important to me. Thus, an integral element of theoretical advance in a relatively unexplored area, was seen to be that it might, for example, offer consultants

a perspective with which to anticipate how their clients might define the significance of others in their complex problems; with which to guide their learning about their clients' constructions of those others; and with which to make sense of the data about others presented to them in the accounts and actions of their clients. It was hoped that the research could contribute to a theoretical base for adding to the repertoire of relevant and useful techniques and approaches to assist with complex problem-solving. In this way, a fourth criterion for a methodology was that it should enable research with some usefulness and generalizability beyond its specific setting.

(v) Consistent with my Model of Man

As Sims (1978) asserts:

"The model of man held by a researcher will influence the data that he seeks, the theory of knowledge that he uses to build those data into theories, and hence the whole theoretical outcome of his research"(p.9.22)

The model of man held in this thesis is not of a biological organism responding to some stimulus, nor 'driven' by internal needs or instincts, nor of a cultural 'dope'.

It is of someone who constructs the meaning and significance of events for himself, in ways that may be shared in some part by some others. It is this model of man which led me to see situational definitions as not 'given' and to seek to develop grounded theory which is carefully and closely derived from the thinking and acting of those I am interested in learning about. This model of man was also central to my conception of what would be valid data in this research ( and to my view that the answer to the question "what is valid data?" is not a straightforward one).

I was not concerned with validity or reliability in terms of a relationship between the data and some 'objective' measuring instrument, and the 'bias-free' reproducibility of that relationship. As Diesing (1972) observes:

"Reliability implies the ideal of an impersonal, automatic investigator; but in case studies the personality of the investigator and his relations with the people he is studying are an essential source of understanding. Validity in all four of its officially (American Psychological Association) approved senses is in the relationship between a test response, profile, or pattern and some real attribute or quality; but ... such isolated data are nearly meaningless because they have no context". (p. 147)

However, I was interested in some kind of validity, such as that reflected in the assertion of Psathas (1973) that:

"The key issue for a sociology of the life world is whether the results of an enquiry fit, make sense and are true to the understanding of ordinary actors in the everyday world". (p. 12)

Yet this statement does not seem to be quite enough. Menzel (1978) disputes the idea that research must be centred around the meanings of those being 'researched' and although theoretical explanations which make no reference to actors' meanings do not "seem promising", they should not be outlawed a priori. He argues that one must specify "to whom?" when asking what acts and situations mean. He also argues that:

"... it is not only legitimate, it is vital, that research problems be conceptualised in terms of the meanings to the problem-experiencers even when they do not coincide with the meanings to the actors involved, ... it is up to us to formulate problems for research, in the first instance, in terms that are meaningful to us; and our eventual solutions will have to be re-translatable into such terms. During the intervening search for explanations, to be sure, we are well advised to take into account what things mean to the actors whom we are studying." (pp. 154-156).



He uses the example of research into the atrocities in Vietnam, which would be defined as atrocities by the researchers and his audience, but not by their perpetrators. Yet, it is argued here that if we are to understand why those atrocities were committed in Vietnam, then it seems quite crucial to understand the meaning of those acts to those who committed them. This does not mean, as I suggested earlier, that these actors' meanings cannot then be set within an interpretation which belongs to the researcher and his audience.

However, Menzel does make an important point: When we talk of valid data being that which is "true to the understanding of ordinary actors in the everyday world" we need to be clear about which actors we are talking about. What is valid research data will differ according to the purpose of the research and therefore also according to whose purposes.

It also seems important to specify what kind of "understanding" we are interested in. Is it, for example, the understanding a person has of his world when he theorizes about it retrospectively or prospectively, or is it that which he has while he is, for example, actually experiencing a complex problem and acting with respect to it? In this research I wished, as far as possible, to learn about the construction of significant others in the context of problem solving and policy analysis in the sense described by Ball (1972):

"In order to understand social conduct we must look to existential causality, that is to the meaning of situations and the situated meanings within them as they are phenomenologically experienced by the actors located within them" (p. 62, my emphasis)

Thus it was with respect to this kind of data that I was concerned by the following criterion of validity suggested by Harre and Secord (1972) - that "precision of meaning corresponds to accuracy of measurement in physical science" (p. 126).

The notion of validity is usually accompanied by ideas about what might be a test of validity. Psathas (op.cit) suggests three possible tests of validity which can be considered as ways of testing the accuracy and authenticity of our understanding of others meanings. One is the 'member' test of validity whereby "The "reader" can become a "player" after having "merely" read the rules" (p. 12). However, as Diesing argues, "evidence that one is acting as a member is provided by others' reactions, which must be interpreted in turn" (p. 153). The same point can be made about Psathas' two other tests of validity: firstly whether the findings are regarded as faithful representations or interpretations which would be recognized to be true by those who ordinarily live the activities described, and secondly whether a person could recognize the activities if confronted with them after only having read the researcher's account.

Thus Diesing has argued of informants' opinions, that they are just as much in need of interpretation and evaluation as other forms of evidence. If, for example, a researcher were to feed back at a later date his or her account and interpretation of data collected to the individuals concerned and they disagreed that this was not what was the

activity was really like, or indeed if they agreed that it was, the researcher would have to interpret and evaluate the reason for their comments. "An informant may agree with an interpretation because he wants to be agreeable, or because he is not interested in the topic and does not want to get into an argument about it, or because he is momentarily persuaded by the verbosity or the status of the participant observer. He may disagree and correct an interpretation because he wants to show the researcher that the latter is still an outsider who does not understand, or because the style of theorizing is unfamiliar or disagreeable to him, or because he wishes to protect esoteric knowledge". (p. 153)

Even if the researcher has a relationship with the individuals concerned which minimizes effects such as these, there are other factors that have to be taken into account. All retrospection involves some reinterpretation of history in the light of its place in the new sequence of events available for consideration and the different knowledge and interest with which to construe it. A different logic will be placed on events which may tidy, simplify, complicate, or otherwise find a plausible and legitimate explanation for previous events and thinking. Thus, Harre and Secord (1972) have argued:

"Clearly there is no possibility of an objective, neutral account by which ... ambiguities could be finally resolved. The solution must be found within this situation. We believe that an adequate solution can be found by admitting the possibility of ambiguity while encouraging a negotiation of accounts in the attempt to resolve it. (p.236)

Thus there seems to be no simple single test of validity to be called upon, and the outcomes of such tests, as with what is to be defined as valid data, will need to be judged in relation to the purposes of the researcher and/or his audience. For example, if a consultant were to find that the findings of the research enabled him to better understand and predict his clients, accounts and actions, even if his interpretations were different from his clients', then this would be one test of the validity of the research for him. If the participants in the research, at a later date, while not wholly recognizing the researcher's interpretations as representing their constructions of their world nevertheless found those interpretations new, exciting or useful ways of conceptualizing about their world, this could be counted as a measure of the research's validity, for them.

Furthermore, the tests of validity discussed above come into operation after or during the research process and were not available to the researcher for her choice of method. In this research the method itself was the main 'test' of validity - that it should be one which I could have confidence in as: enabling the participants to communicate to me their situational meanings, as far as possible as they were experienced; that the participants felt able to reveal data they they might regard as sensitive; that they should regard this as a worthwhile activity for themselves rather than to please me; that my understanding of their meanings should be continually checked (as they were constructed and used) through feed-

back and discussion.

### SOME POPULAR METHODS

The choice of one methodology involves a rejection of others, and it behoves the researcher to provide some justification for this choice. This section attempts to provide such a justification.

#### (i) The Quantitative Survey

One method widely used in social science research is that of the quantitative questionnaire survey. There were several reasons why such a method seemed to be unlikely to satisfy the criteria above. Firstly, I had some theories about the nature of organizational life, and my reading of the social-psychological literature had led to me to have certain beliefs and expectations about the topic and an interest in some concepts and ideas from the literature which might be relevant. The latter are, however, set outside the context of problem solving and policy analysis. I did not have clear-cut hypotheses with which to formulate a set of questions for a questionnaire survey which I could confidently believe would be meaningful to any respondents in such a survey. Nor indeed, did I have confidence that I would understand 'what question the person is answering' when they answered according to 'their interpretation of the meaning of the question. This issue of understanding is what Douglas (1971) is referring to when he argues that:

"... there is no way of getting at the social meanings

from which one either implicitly or explicitly infers the larger patterns except through some form of communication with the members of that society or group; and, to be valid and reliable, any such communication with the members presupposes an understanding of their language, their uses of that language, their own understandings of what the people doing the observations are upto, and so on almost endlessly. How, for example would we possibly get valid and reliable determinations of the meanings of work or sex to the Japanese without understanding how to go about asking a Japanese person about work or sex to get "truthful" answers?" (p. 9)

Secondly, I lacked confidence that an individual, even when assured of confidentiality, might be persuaded to reveal data which he felt to be in some way illegitimate or sensitive not merely in the context of a general discussion about the nature of internal politics but involving a detailed analysis of thinking about particular individuals or groups, to an outsider who could offer him no particular benefit from so doing other than the remote event of some possibly interesting future learning about himself at a future date. (The issue raised here does not, of course, relate solely to the research situation involving the administration of a questionnaire and it will be returned to later).

Furthermore a quantitative survey would not enable me to gain the 'intimate familiarity' I wanted to obtain which required a relatively long term in-depth involvement. What I would have learned about would also have been almost certainly the person's retrospective and prospective theorizing about his thinking about others rather than that thinking as it was constructed and used in attempting to manage a complex problem. This is not 'invalid' data, but not the kind of data I was primarily interested in.

Finally, a quantitative survey would have involved the imposition of my a-priori preconceptions upon the topic area, exactly what I have already explained my model of man and interest in the development of grounded theory had led me to wish to avoid. The point here is not that questionnaire surveys are in some strange way detached from our common-sense understandings of everyday life. As Douglas (1971) points out: "... the theoretical questions or hypotheses to which the surveys are directed are in fact derived from very old common-sense understandings of everyday life". (p.7). Rather it is that a quantitative questionnaire survey must assume that the researcher's everyday understandings are shared by the respondents, so that the interpretation of its questions, and then the interpretation of the answers to the questions, can be treated as relatively non-problematic.

Thus Djesing (1972) argues of quantitative investigations using surveys with variables, indices, and operational definitions that while it may be possible, thereby, to develop concepts which respect and retain the characteristics of the area under study, this has not in fact happened.

"In practice, investigations of this sort have been confined to a few variables of interest to the investigator. The variables have been selected in advance, and observation has been mainly confined to them. Even if enough variables could somehow be assembled to produce some approximation to the complexity of the real system, the resulting avalanche of numbers and arbitrary operational definitions would have no recognizable resemblance to the original. Variables, indices, and operational definitions are in current practice selected to meet such requirements of the scientific method as measurability, controllability, verifiability, and above all,

general applicability, rather than for their faithfulness to the particular subject being described. Consequently they are likely to be highly abstract and general, applicable in some way to many human systems but not expressing the unique qualities of any particular system." (pp. 139-140).

A similar point is made by Lofland (1976) who argues even more strongly that quantitative surveys can lead to and encourage the "ethereal and empty" generalizations which have "a highly indefinite relation to any actual, ongoing empirical world", (p. 11) that I have argued I wished to avoid.

"It is the aim of a great many statistical operations to specify the "typical", as in various routines of sampling and forms of averaging and standardizing. "Descriptive statistics", in their very nature, seek to specify the more frequent versus the less frequent, the more typical versus the less typical. As actually consumed, interest centres on the things found to be "most frequent" and "most typical". And inferential statistics attempt to determine things most strongly covarying, to find "the most of those are the most of that ". Both these sponsor a main tendency, a bulk tendency image of social life. They lust for things most frequent and things most strongly correlated, giving the impression of delight of finding the largest frequency and the strongest causes in human situations." (p. 71)

### (ii) Laboratory Experiments

Many of the arguments given above also explain why I chose not to use the laboratory experiment - an episodic rather than longitudinal study which again involves the testing of well formed a priori hypotheses. I shall not therefore repeat them here. However, there are two elaborations of those arguments that I wish to make here. To view a person's actions and accounts as arising from the meanings he assigns to situations is also to see him as acting and



giving accounts in the light of his construction of the particular research situation he is in - in this case the strange and artificial context of the laboratory. As Friedlander (1968) suggests:

'All too often..the behavioral scientist has followed the paradigm originated for the study of inanimate objects, and thus has assumed that the subject of the experiment is an inert object on which the experiment is performed (rather than a human being who can react to the researcher and the research process), who may select certain variables(even the randomized ones) for attention; who may try to put meaning into the situation; who may attempt to outguess the researcher (Back, Hood and Brehm, 1964); and for whom the research results may be of incidental concern compared to the artificialities of his relationships with the researcher." (p. 489).

Not only, furthermore, is the subject in an experiment placed in an artificial situation but the relationship between his actions and accounts and the situation he is in is one which is not explored and taken into account.

"The 'passive subject' is not really passive; he is apt to have ideas concerning the meaning of the experimenters acts and the purpose of the experiment. If these are not taken into account, the results are apt to be misleading at best and false at worst. But even more crucial is the inadvisability of designing an experiment as if persons were passive subjects responding in a mechanical fashion instead of as a thinking self-directing agent, since the processes by which their behaviour is generated will, generally speaking, be thus automatically excluded from empirical investigation." (Harre and Secord, 1972, p. 297).

### (iii)The Qualitative Personal Interview

A frequent method of qualitative research adopted by those who reject survey and experimentation methods is the personal, relatively unstructured, qualitative interview, which may range in length from an hour to a whole day. Many of the problems of directiveness, over-simplification, lack of trust, etc, can be overcome by the skilled and sensitive interviewer.

However I still had concerns about the method which led me to reject it. Firstly, I was still uncertain about whether, and how I would know whether, a person for whom the research had little personal relevance would be committed to giving me 'valid' data. Maruyama (1974) has vividly described the attitude of the prison inmates in his studies:

"Inmates are frequently viewed by psychologists, sociologists, students, newspaper reporters, etc, whose purposes are irrelevant to inmates, such as proving a theory, writing a book, getting a degree, obtaining promotion or prestige. On the other hand, the purposes relevant to inmates are for example, food made edible, vocational training updated, harassments reduced, etc. There is no relevance resonance between the inmates and the usual interviewers. The inmates feel exploited by the interviewers. In order to keep the intrusion of the exploiters to the minimum, inmates use sophisticated phoney answers which make the interviewers happy.

Each inmate has a ready made set of phoney answers for each type of professional: one set for psychologists, another for sociologists, etc. He can also induce in the interviewer the delusion that the interview is relevant. They can even fool psychiatrists." (p. 391)

It is not necessary to presume that all research respondents will feel exploited by researchers and deliberately develop phoney answers to acknowledge that a person for whom research has no intrinsic relevance may see little reason to provide a researcher with valid data. This issue seemed to be particularly significant in the context of this research topic. I might, with careful 'sampling', talk to a range of people about the complex policy problems they were experiencing at the time. But then, I wondered, why would they be prepared to talk to some barely known researcher who was not actually trying to help them with the problem they found complicated, confusing, perhaps difficult to articulate in part and containing some potentially highly sensitive data about their significant others?

ACTION RESEARCH

(i)The setting

The method that I felt would most substantially approach the criteria set out earlier was that of a relatively long term, qualitative, in-depth involvement through action research; working with individuals in an overt 'contracted' role of attempting to help them in their efforts to tackle their complex policy problem. And in the event the data for this thesis comes from the first year of a project which Colin Eden and I had become involved in with two individuals seeking to tackle, through voluntary action, the problem of unemployment among the black kids of their area.

The project was one which both of us had wished to become involved in as a way of understanding more about the processes of problem construction in a setting different from the more traditional organizational one, and because we ourselves were interested in and concerned by our clients' issues. I had not entered the project on the basis of it providing me with data for my Ph. D. thesis. However, it soon became very clear that this was a project which was ideally suited to giving me the kind of data about the research topic I wanted for my Ph.D.

The two clients, whom I shall henceforth call Robert and Janet, saw their issue which they labelled "the problem of black kids in a space age world catering for the articulate" characterized by enormous complexity. Much of this complexity had to do with their interests and uncertainties about how to influence the actions and attitudes of others: the other members of their voluntary group, the internal politics of which were often both intense and viscious; the black kids themselves, many of whom were

disillusioned, lacking in self-confidence, no longer interested in trying to get a job; black parents, whom Robert and Janet saw as undervaluing the importance of education with significant consequences for the kids' own interest in it; the Youth Service, the Local Authority, the Manpower Services Commission whom they wished to persuade to invest resources in giving post-school training to unemployed youngsters, and others. Thus the 'significant other' content of their problem construction was considerable, and although not all complex policy problems may have such a high significant other content, it seemed an ideal context in which to do research on this topic.

At this point it also seems worthwhile commenting on those aspects of research so infrequently made explicit- those of time, resources, opportunity. They are so infrequently made explicit because they are often regarded as illegitimate in 'proper' research. For someone like myself, interested not only in the specific topic of this research but also in the wider processes of problem construction and wishing to do research and publish about this at the same time as completing a part-time Ph.D. on a specific part of it, questions of time and opportunity were importantly salient. My thinking about research methodology for the Ph.D. topic had led me to wish to adopt an action research method. Where and when I should do that action research was, however, a matter of time, - and opportunity. In finding that a setting that I was committed to anyway was ideal for my Ph.D, I was indeed being opportunistic, and in being so was responding to one of the 'realities' of the research process for many who undertake it.

(ii) Situated Meanings and Context

The notion of "situated meanings" refers to what Douglas (1971) calls "the contextual determination of meaning" :

"..the basic idea of which is that the context within which a given statement or action occurs is of fundamental importance in determining the meanings imputed to it by the members of society. This is the basic idea behind all phenomenological theories of meaning.. (p.37)

It is argued here that it is critical to attempts to gain understanding of contextually determined meanings as they are "phenomenologically experienced" that the context of the research is, or bears a close relation to, that in which those meanings are constructed and used. The action research methodology of working with individuals upon their highly complex policy problem meant that I was learning about their problem situation and their meanings as these were being constructed and used for explanation, prediction and action.

This is not to suggest that the accounts of the participants were fully 'monitoring' commentaries. Meetings with them took place once, sometimes twice a week, over the year in question, usually lasting between two and three hours at a time although sometimes more than this. Thus accounts were to a degree both retrospective and anticipatory with respect to the time between meetings. However, the problems associated with retrospective and prospective accounts are significantly less when those accounts are taken, and made sense of, over a lengthy period of in-depth involvement, in which accounts are part of the relevant, unfolding present of the individuals concerned and "real in their consequences" for their actions.

(iii) Relevance to the Participants

I have argued that a major concern in my choice of appropriate methodology was that it should be one in which the individuals concerned felt invited to provide me with data about a possibly sensitive topic in its richness, complexity and 'reality' to them for their thinking and acting in their world. The action research method was one in which the participants could see some relevance to themselves of articulating their problem-constructions and their beliefs about others, a relevance continuing over a substantive period to permit of a longitudinal study. Maruyama's (1974) method of creating "relevance resonance" is to undertake endogenous research, in which the academic researcher acts as a resource to assist the participants who undertake the research for themselves, "not only as data collectors but also as conceptualisers, focus-selectors, hypothesis-makers, research-designers and data-analysts, using their own epistemology." (p. 390).

In this research there was no attempt to undertake fully endogenous research of this kind. The individuals in this research were engaged in attempting to tackle their problem of finding ways of helping unemployed kids of their area. It was a task to which they devoted most of their time and energy. They did not have the time for, nor were interested in, research designed to learn more about the nature of problems and problem solving but they were interested in a process of consultancy which would help them tackle their problem. Thus in this case what was achieved was a negotiated rather than a fully convergent "relevance resonance" in terms of research purposes about

which the individuals concerned knew but did not themselves share. And there was a genuine convergence of interest in terms of our genuine interest in and concern to help with our clients' issue. There was also, crucially, a convergent "relevance resonance" in terms of the process of learning about Robert and Janets' problem and thinking about others, coming from the particular consultancy method used. In this research, our approach to the consultant-client relationship was to reject a role as 'expert problem-solvers'. The reasons for so doing had as much to do with the practical implications for effective consultancy which will be found relevant and useful by the client as with personal values about the nature of relationships between people. As Eden and Jones (1980) have argued,

"The consultants' role as something other than expert help derives from (our) understanding of the successes and failures of systems analysis and management science consultancy, in that it seems inappropriate for professionals whose skills lie in the understanding and modelling of problems to proposit a knowledge about a specific problem situation which implies the singular superior authority of the evaluative judgement made by the consultant. In addition, the majority of implementation problems within management science projects appear to derive from the consultant paying too little attention to the images of the world, as they are defined by the client." (p. 151)

Using the technique of cognitive mapping (see also, for example, Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, Eden and Jones, 1980, Sims, Eden and Jones, 1981) to construct a model of our clients' qualitative, subjective, political beliefs and theories about their problem, the consultancy method was one in which listening, learning about, careful exploration of meaning and feedback of an explicit representation of their problem was designed to enable the individuals

concerned to:

"...see as legitimate knowledge their own subjective understanding of their organizational life and then to self-consciously reflect upon this knowledge so that they may learn to know what they know, and learn from its implications, and thus learn by enquiring in a relevant way." (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p. 5).

The basis for the participants in the research articulating their definitions of the situation was thus not primarily to satisfy the needs of research but because they were thereby engaged in an activity which was meaningful and useful to themselves. Indeed in this situation without a formal contract, with no traditional organizational norms and pressures to reinforce a continuation of the project, the usefulness of the activity to them was the main reason for busy people whose attempts to solve their problem engaged most of their time and energy, to continue regular contact. This process of consultancy was also one which involved continual care about exploring and checking meaning. The validity of understanding their problem reality and their meanings was continually being tested in terms of its ownership and usefulness to them.

Of course the process of articulation and reflection which characterized this research situation will have resulted in some kind of change in thinking of the individuals concerned. We can argue that this is inherent, to a greater or lesser degree, in any process of explication and discussion. Furthermore, the degree to which what was previously tacit or implicit has been changed by



being made explicit is something which cannot in principle be discovered and monitored. This is not to suggest that it is impossible to pay attention to and monitor changes in explicated beliefs, and this I did. And additionally the changes in thinking that occurred were not by some mysterious process divorced from the way in which they continued to construe, and act in their world but integral to it.

(iv) The "Secret Advisor Role

I have argued that a significant feature was that the individuals concerned were engaged in a process whereby the articulation of their construction of their problem was a meaningful and useful activity to them. It is important, however, not to discount the aspect of trust as a basis for their revealing data, particularly that to do with other people, which might not otherwise have been revealed.

Here, this was gained by our obvious concern for them and their problem, our readiness to spend significant amounts of time with them over a long period including frequently making ourselves available urgently and ad hoc to talk about particular 'crises' that had emerged and were worrying them; and by our taking on the role described by the individuals concerned as "secret advisers" which involved no direct participation in their day-to-day activities and whereby the consultancy project was one which

the others with whom they were involved did not know about.

The disadvantage of this role was that I was unable to observe Robert and Janet with others. The issue here was not that of wishing to check in some sense the 'truth' of their definitions of others. Rather it was that there was no opportunity to observe and explore with them the relationship between their accounts and their actions with those others, some of which they may have forgotten or regarded as not sufficiently significant or relevant or even legitimate to describe. There will, however, be trade-offs in any research situation and in this one to have been involved in a full participant-observer role would almost certainly have reduced the freedom they felt to reveal their beliefs about others. This would not simply be a matter of being uncertain about whether or not the revealing of data about others would be used in some way that could be threatening to them. What a person will say about others to someone who knows those others is based on his understanding of the beliefs that the person holds about the others and his relationship with them. While the nature of the involvement was one in which it was a meaningful activity for them to reflect upon their beliefs and feelings about particular individuals and groups as they seemed significant to their problem, nevertheless because we were not directly involved with the others there was less need to, for example, either please or avoid causing offence.

At the same time it is certainly the case that there will

have been certain aspects of their thinking about others that Robert and Janet did not reveal, because of lapses of memory, choices about relevance and significance, 'taken for-granted triviality' and issues of what might be inappropriate to reveal in front of one another, as well as ourselves, including that which might be considered illegitimate to reveal to anyone. However, there are two important points to be made here. Firstly, that made by McClean, Sims, Mangham and Tuffield (1982) about fully monitoring commentary, that "...you would create such an unusual situation...that. you would need to find some way of allowing for the peculiar social situation..in which the presence of the researcher had placed him." (p.14)

Secondly and most significantly to have insisted upon a detailed blow by blow account of every interaction with every person they had met rather than allowing them to talk about the things which most excited or disturbed them and which they regarded as most significant would not only have been seen as extremely odd activity but would have obfuscated that learning which did take place, about what did seem to them so significant that they wanted to talk about it and reflect upon it. Finally, the way in which research is conducted must involve choices, which in this case I have attempted to make explicit and explain, about what data might be learned at the cost of missing other data, and which method might best obtain that which is regarded as most important and relevant to the research.

### WIDER RELEVANCE

In this research, the degree to which I could, or would wish to, with confidence propose that its specific findings would recur elsewhere, is, and must be, limited.

This is not to suggest that generalization is impossible through qualitative, idiographic research methods. Thus Diesing (1972) suggests that:

"The basic solution is to move from the particular to the general and back in small steps rather than in one grand jump. One first compares one's case with a similar case, then to another and another, then to one somewhat different. Potential generalizations discovered in the first case can be tested against the other cases. The generalizations that survive these cases are not claimed to be universally valid, but valid only for cases similar to those studied. Gradually one moves to still wider generalizations and a more heterogeneous range of cases, though the scope of previous generalizations may also be narrowed in this process. This is the comparative method, which is always used in case studies to produce or to apply generalizations." (p. 183).

For the reasons outlined in this chapter, I chose to study one case intensively rather than attempt to gather a wider range of data in which I would have had less confidence, and research tended to be submitted for a thesis has to stop somewhere. However I would argue that there are ways in which research can still be seen to satisfy at least in part the criterion set out at the beginning of this chapter of having relevance and usefulness outside its specific context.

First of all there is a possibility of something approaching the comparative method of generalization set out by Diesing. Although there is little existing research on the specific topic area and its context of problem solving and

policy analysis, the total body of theory and research relating to thinking about others is large. This can thus provide a base of data, ideas, concepts to which the researcher can relate the findings of his research asking the question: "Do these findings and concepts appear to be reflected in, or in some way help make sense of, the findings in this instance?" Although an affirmative answer is not an assurance of their general applicability it may in some way increase confidence in their possible explanatory and predictive power at least for contexts similar to this one. Furthermore a negative answer, while not denying the applicability of concepts to other situations, may provide important learning about the limitations of any claim to general applicability.

Secondly, and relatedly, the research may also be seen to have some wider application in terms of its possible contribution to the elaboration of the empirical meaning of an existing concept.

"The preponderant majority of our concepts are conspicuously vague and imprecise in their empirical connotation, yet we use them right and left in our analyses without concern about elaborating, refining, or testing their empirical connotation ... empirical meaning is not given by a definition that merely serves the purpose of discourse; it exists in a specification that allows one to go to the empirical world and to say securely that this is an instance of the concept and that is not." (Blumer, 1970a, p. 37)

For these reasons I have attempted throughout this research to relate its findings to other ideas and research that seems relevant, and as an integral element in the process of interpretation which "... carries the scientist beyond the confines of the problem he has studied, since in

making interpretations he has to relate his findings to an outside body of theory or to a set of conceptions that transcend the study he has made."(Blumer,ibid, p.23)

Thirdly, even the apparent particularity of the data and findings may of itself have some wider application, If, for example a consultant is led by these findings to consider that the people in this case had developed an idiosyncratic repertoire of theories for explaining the behaviour of others, he may dismiss the findings as irrelevant to his own situation. He, may, on the other hand be alerted to issues of subjectivity in ways that invite him to try and learn about the particular repertoire of theories his own clients have to explain their problem-significant others.

Somewhat more generally, a consultant may be drawn by the findings and discussion in this research to think it might be worth at least tentatively exploring more explicitly with his clients any inter-personal and internal political aspects of their problems. A policy-maker may be led to consider that some of the ways the people in this case thought about others could be a new and helpful basis for reflecting upon the ramifications of his own relationships with others; they may 'spark off' new and different categories of his own. What is being suggested here is that the data for a particular case and the theorizing about it can have wider applicability and relevance than its particular context, because it may lead some people to think about the topic area and relate the findings to their own situation in ways they would not otherwise have thought of.

PART THREE:

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER THREE:

#### CONSTRUCTING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OTHERS: A FRAMEWORK

##### INTRODUCTION

This was not presuppositionless research, and I did have some questions that I wanted to ask about the research topic as a basis for developing what might be an explanatory, predictive 'stance towards data'. The first of these seemed to me to be an essential starting point in a relatively unexplored area, that is, "How can we theoretically understand the process by which some actors come to be defined as significant in a complex problem (and not others)?" Both in asking this question, and in answering it through my interpretation of the data from this case, I also, of course, had what Blumer (1970a) calls a "prior scheme":

"One can see the empirical world only through some scheme or image of it. The entire act of scientific study is oriented and shaped by the underlying picture of the empirical world that is used. This picture sets the selection and formulation of problems, the determination of what are data, the means to be used in getting data, the kinds of relations sought between data, and the forms in which propositions are cast." (p.22)

The model of man used in this research is not of an organism responding to some stimulus, nor 'driven' by internal needs or instincts, nor of a cultural 'dope'. Rather it is of a human being who subjectively constructs the meaning and significance of events, in ways that may be shared, in some part, with some others. To use Thomas and Thomas' concept, it is held that individuals 'define situations'. In Chapter One, the implications of this perspective for understanding the nature of problems was set out as a view that problems do not inhere objectively in situations, to be discovered by examining the facts of the matter, but rather are the personal constructions people place on events: "To paraphrase a well known quotation from Thomas and Thomas (1928, p.572), if a person defines a problem



as real, then it is real in the sense that he will try to solve it." (Sims, 1979, p.913)

In this chapter this conception of the nature of problems will be elaborated as a framework within which a theoretical understanding of the construction of 'problem-significant' others can be set. It will be argued that the construction by a person of the significance of others in his problem involves a complex and personal framework of theories and expectations by which the actions of others are seen to have ramifications for the values at the centre of his problem definition. This chapter is intended both to provide an introduction to this case and a relatively general theoretical setting for the remaining chapters which explore in more substantive detail the nature and process of thinking about their problem-significant others by the individuals concerned.

#### ON THE NATURE OF PROBLEMS

In discussing the way in which individuals do construct the meaning of situations, reference is usually made to two main aspects of a person's cognitions. Firstly, that the process of defining situations involves a person bringing to bear upon his situation a personal mental framework of beliefs, attitudes, theories, hypotheses, and so on, which have been developed over his life to understand and predict the nature of events and outcomes in his world, and the relationships between them. This mental framework has variously been labelled, for example, as a "system of expectations" (Parsons, 1951), as a "construct system" (Kelly, 1955), as a "scheme of interpretation" (Schutz, 1970) or as mental "schemata" (Neisser, 1976). The process of giving meaning to situations through the bringing to

bear of this framework, is not one of 'filtering out' from the mass of information bombarding our senses, but of selectively perceiving some things and not others. As Neisser (1976) asserts:

"The information in any real situation is indefinitely rich. There is always more to see than anyone sees, and more to know than anyone knows. Why don't we see it?

The answer most frequently offered, theoretically seductive but quite misleading, is that we "filter it out." ... Psychologically or biologically, however, this notion makes no sense. There is no mechanism, process, or system that functions to reject these stimuli such that they would be perceived if it were to fail. ... Selection is a positive process, not a negative one. Perceivers pick up only what they have schemata for, and willy-nilly ignore the rest." (pp. 79-80)

Secondly, the process of defining the situation, in which events are given both meaning and significance, has been seen to involve the 'goal-oriented' aspects of a person's construction of his world. Thus Ball (1972) defines the 'definition of the situation' as: "... the sum of all recognized information, from the point-of-view of the actor, which is relevant to his locating himself and others, so that he can engage in self-determined lines of action and interaction" (p.63, my emphasis). Similarly, Jones and Thibaut (1958; see also Silverman, 1970, Schutz, 1970) suggest that:

"If we can successfully identify the goals for which an actor is striving in the interaction situation, we can begin to say something about the cues to which he will attend, and the meaning he is most likely to assign them ... In studying the inference process in social perception ... questions of attention, selective perception, deliberate decisions of relevance, etc., enter into the picture. The perceiver does not passively assign equal priority to incoming cues but actively seeks out information which is relevant to his purposes in the situation of interaction " (pp. 152-153; my emphasis)

These ideas are reflected in the perspective on problems used here, as the personal constructions people place on events. We have found it useful (e.g., Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, 1982) to consider the mental framework a person brings to bear on a situation leading him to define it as problematic as comprising two interrelated systems: a belief system, of the person's theories about the existence, nature and relationships between entities and events in his world; and a sub-set of beliefs, a value system, comprising his images, perhaps ill-formed and ambivalent, of preferred situations, or 'the world as it might be':

"..we see a problem situation as one about which a person feels there is some difference between the situation as it exists (and/or as he expects it to exist in the future) and something which may be conceived of as his preferred situation. While the concept of a preferred situation is necessary for understanding the nature of a problem situation we do not wish to imply that the preferred situation can be described so much as its existence can be conceived of. It is necessary to conceive of a preferred situation in order to understand how situations become problematic; the image of preferences is unlikely to be definite. Indeed the situation may be problematic simply because there is a feeling that there is something about it could be improved, without knowing just what the situation would be like when it had been improved. (Eden and Sims, 1977, p.3)

In this way one 'operational' definition of values within the context of problem solving would be that values are the definers of problems for a person when, within a Personal Construct Theory perspective (Kelly, 1955) he construes some disquieting contrast between the world 'as it is' or 'will be', without intervention, in comparison with an image of the world as, in preference, 'it should be'. The meaning and significance of what is preferred is elaborated through its contrast with what is unsatisfactory- and vice-versa. The conception of a preferred world 'as it should be' may then become the basis

for constructing a set of goals and objectives, the attainment of which could reduce or remove the disquieting discrepancy. The role of the consultant may be to help the client to do this, to come to explicate and operationalize what was previously indefinite or inarticulable.

#### ROBERT AND JANETS' PROBLEM SITUATION

For Robert and Janet it was the current situation for the black kids of their area, who had left school without qualifications, and their likely future, without jobs in a "space-age world catering for the articulate", that was the source of their disquiet; the basis for their constructing an image of a world that 'might be' and in preference 'should be'; and a "call to action, a statement of purpose".

"It is the tensions between image and experience that produce for the actor models of the world as it might be...The world as it might be provides for individual actors and policy-makers alike a call to action, a statement of purpose." (Young, 1977, p.10)

For Robert it began when " I saw all these kids hanging around the streets, doing nothing, some of them getting into trouble. I had to do something to get them off the streets, to get their minds and bodies active." This led him to approach the Youth Service to set up a local centre where the kids could go during the day, and with the helpful intervention of a local minister, a day-centre was established under the aegis of the Youth Service, with Robert installed as the part-time youth leader. The innovation proved to be a popular one. Many of the local unemployed black kids came to spend their afternoons there. Soon, however, Robert once more became dissatisfied. For although there was some attempt to provide help and information for the kids in their efforts to find jobs,

the facility was primarily a social one: "All they do is play games. They are learning nothing. They will never be able to get jobs this way. We must find a way to help them get training, to go on to technical college to get qualifications. This is a space-age world catering for the articulate. These kids will always be at a disadvantage, have uphill struggles, if we do not help them"

During this time the establishment of the day-centre had aroused interest among various individuals in the community, most of them activists in a number of local voluntary and political groups, and the problem of the unemployed kids became the basis for the formation of a voluntary action group with the aim of helping the kids. Robert was a member, not surprisingly, and membership of the group was the basis of Janet's involvement. She too wanted to find ways of helping the kids acquire some training and/or qualifications to enable them to more easily find jobs; and to give them a new hope and self-confidence with which to do so. " These kids are fed up. They keep going to interviews for jobs and not getting them, and they have become seasoned to unemployment. But I think they do want jobs and we want to help them"

Both Robert and Janet were convinced, with other members of the group, that there was a need for a training workshop to be established where the kids could acquire experience and training in particular trades, and possibly the interest and commitment to go on to technical college to obtain paper qualifications. It was to this end ~~that~~ they devoted most of their time and energy during the year of this research, carrying on on their own when the original group disbanded after a grant application to Manpower Service Commission and Youth

Service had been turned down. Both of them regarded the project as more important than obtaining full time jobs. Thus, their concern to help the kids was a value in the ways described by Baier (1969) who suggests that values are "...tendencies of people to devote their resources (time, energy, money) to the attainment of certain ends"(p.40), and Sumner (1968):

" Acceptance of a value judgement involves a commitment of the will, a decision to act, which goes far beyond any mere description of the facts of the case" (p.383;see also the discussion of commitment by Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979)

Most conceptions of values also suggest that they do not exist in isolation, but are interrelated in a hierarchical value system. Thus, Robert and Janets' conception of a preferred future was more complex than helping kids who had already left school without qualifications.

#### A SYSTEM OF VALUES

Robert and Janet wanted to see kids still at school become aware of the importance of education, and more committed therefore to the importance of attempting to obtain qualifications. Robert spoke for both of them when he argued that; "These kids, they do not realise the importance of education and the uphill struggles they have to face later in this space- age world." Both of them saw as an important element in the attitude of the kids the attitude of their parents to education. For Robert it was a mission to persuade parents to value education more highly.

"I sincerely believe that we parents have got to help our children. But black parents think that manna will come from Heaven, they don't help their kids and think they will still come up bright. It is because of a super passion for money, going out to work, going to bingo, they do not help their children."

The concern to see the kids, both those who had left school without training and jobs, and those still at school, with their parents, become more aware of the importance of education, was in turn linked to a vision of the future in which blacks took their place among whites:

"When I go into shops and banks, I want to see blacks there, not just whites. I want to see blacks in professional jobs, black bank managers, accountants. I want to see blacks live where they want to live, not just in black communities"  
(Robert)

Robert's conception of a preferred future was also one in which the "black community have a new positive black consciousness", with a new sense of unity, "one cause, one direction"; and a capacity for "self-examination, in which we learn how to think, not what other people tell us to think; including "we blacks know the importance of education and care about our dignity and self-respect,"

All these ideas were linked in complex means-ends chains, where the attitude of kids still at school was crucially affected by the attitude of their parents, and indeed the influence of the older kids who had already left school, and kids leaving school with qualifications in the future could take their place alongside whites and construct in the black community a new "positive black consciousness." This, in turn and in the unfolding scheme of things, could be the basis for the kids who had become parents encouraging their own kids to value education, and so on. Some of these beliefs are shown in the cognitive map on page 3.9.

In terms of the direction of effort by Robert and Janet and the construction of their hierarchical system of values,

Part of the cognitive map constructed during the project. Each of the concepts contained within the loops has further links to other concepts within the total map. Dots separate the discrete poles of bi-polar concepts; the two poles of monotonic concepts are "an increase in", "a decrease in" respectively. A +ve sign attached to an arrow indicates a casual relationship between similar poles; a -ve sign a relationship across poles. A single line between concepts represents a non-causal link.



the different elements in this complex image can be seen in relation to Ackoff and Emerys' notion of goals, objectives, and ideals, distinguished according to time to realization:

"A goal..is an outcome that a subject intends most strongly over a set of environments and a time interval, and that is obtainable in these conditions...an objective is a desired outcome that is not obtainable in the time-period being considered, but progress toward it is possible during that time period, and is obtainable at a later time. ...An ideal..is an outcome that can never be obtained but can be approached without limit."(1972.pp 56-57)

Robert and Janets' goal, that which they intended most strongly and immediately, was to set up a training workshop to help the kids who had left school without qualifications and were unemployed. Influencing parents and kids still at school were later objectives, and indeed setting up a training workshop was seen by them to be one step towards achieving them by leading the others to become more aware of the importance of education and training. Robert's vision of a "positive black consciousness" was a still longer-term conception, perhaps something like an ideal in Ackoff and Emerys' terms.

#### THE CONSTRUCTION OF SIGNIFICANT OTHERS IN A COMPLEX PROBLEM

If the above discussion provides essential background information about Robert and Janets' problem situation, it also is the basis for seeing how others can be defined as significant to a person's problem.

##### (i) Those for whom I have a conception of a preferred state of existence.

Firstly, black kids, their parents, the black community, were those whom Robert and Janet described as "those we are doing this for". Their image of a preferred future which became a "call to action" was centred around helping these others in ways that Robert and Janet believed would be preferable

for them. That values can be 'other-directed' in this way, albeit with salience for personal action, is suggested by Rokeach (1973) and Baier (1969) respectively as follows:

"A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite mode of conduct or end-state of existence." (p.5, my emphasis)

A value " vaguely points or indicates possible states of affairs toward whose realization..(the person)..has a favourable attitude..because..(he)..believes, explicitly or implicitly, that their realization makes a favourable difference to the life of someone, not necessarily himself." (p.57, my emphasis)

Within the category of significant others for Robert and Janet, of "those we are doing this for", the unemployed kids who had already left school were the sub-set of significant others whom they described as "the really needy we want to help" and this label of theirs captures something of the way in which helping these kids was the goal which they "intended most strongly" during the period of this research.

However, as we have argued elsewhere (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979; see also Armstrong, 1979), the concept of a hierarchy is not straight forward. There may be several ways of conceptually distinguishing between different levels of a hierarchical value system, and thus, if some of these values are 'other-directed', between different sub-categories of others who are 'those for whom I have a conception of a preferred state of existence'. We suggest that one value may be superordinate to another if:

"..(i) A is valued more than B-attention will be directed to defending a threat to A, rather than B..(ii) B is realizable within a shorter time period than A..(iii) A is more ambiguous than B; (iv) A is a more generally applicable construct than B; (v) A has a greater range of convenience than B- this is not quite the same as (iv), merely because it can be defined from the other data considering, for example, the number of other values implicated by a change in value A when compared with those implicated by a change in value B; (vi) B is a subset of A definitionally." (pp45-46)

We also suggest that it is unlikely that these different approaches to establishing a value hierarchy will all be consistent with one another and it will be necessary to choose in any particular situation which is likely to be most relevant to an individual for working on his problem. Thus, for example, in this case, 'ambiguity' and 'definitional subset' were not particularly relevant as ways of distinguishing between their other-directed values. Nor were the other approaches always compatible.

For example, 'time-to-realization' and 'general applicability' and indeed means-ends instrumentality, lead to the placing of their goal to do with helping the currently unemployed kids by setting up a training workshop at a lower level in the hierarchy than the other concerns. However, in terms of 'defending a threat against' and 'range of convenience', it consumed far more of their energy and anxiety and was importantly linked to other values to do with obtaining a job which they could find rewarding and providing a regular income (running the workshop), and, for Robert, his own image in the black community, "who are trusting me to get what I promised".

As an added complexity, the superordinacy-subordinacy relationship in a hierarchical categorization of these kinds of significant others may not be static in terms of the direction of energy, and anxiety, during a process of working on a complex problem over time. In Chapter Seven I shall explore in more detail the way in which Robert, although not, I believe, deliberately concerned to further his position and image in the black community, became extremely anxious when that image appeared to be threatened, to the extent that the problem defined by this value, for the moment took 'precedence'.

The way in which the black community represented not only "those we are doing this for" but also an important audience for Robert for performance in his problem, as I shall show in Chapter Seven, also suggests (fairly commonsensically) that there may be more than one 'role' for a policy maker played by any significant others who are 'those for whom I have a conception of a preferred state of existence' (which I seek to attain). One such role may, of course, merely be as a legitimating label, rather than personal significance, within the context of norms requiring public declarations about 'the good of the organization'; or, the personal significance of the others is that they can punish or reward rather than because there is a genuine wish to help them in some way.

It is these kinds of complexities which suggest that the particular meaning and significance in relation to one another and within the problem of any who might be a policy-makers "those for whom I have a conception of a preferred state of existence" (which I seek to attain) will need to be explored as a matter of particularity, by for example, a consultant who wishes to offer effective help to a client's defined problem. It is also these kinds of complexities that may contribute to the form of a policy-maker's complex problem as an issue rather than a routinely solvable difficulty:

"... an issue will be related to a relatively high-order value, will include several problems which cannot necessarily be easily identified, will usually imply significant doubt and anxiety about the nature of a satisfactory outcome, and often implies the acknowledged existence of important value conflict at a level of ambiguity or generality which gives rise to confusion and complexity." (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p.16)

(ii) Those whose attitudes and actions have  
ramifications for values

If values are at the centre of problem definition - "the process by which a person comes to regard himself as having a problem and as knowing what is the central feature of that problem", it is the framework of theories that a person has about the nature and relationships between events with implications for his values, that elaborate the content of the person's problem formulation. That is, "the process by which a person understands his situation, and the relationship between the various elements of that situation and the problem that he has defined ... the person building a model for himself of the situation and what it is that keeps the problem in place." (Sims, 1978, pp. 3.6 - 3.7)

In order to learn about the content of a person's problem, we need to learn about the content and structure of this 'model'. It may include some or all of the following: beliefs which describe the characteristics of the current situation, how they are interrelated, how they came to be, and what aspects are particularly unsatisfactory; the form the current situation might take in the future without intervention, and the bases for this prediction; the characteristics of any preferred situation; and any theories about how the current situation might be changed, with the constraints and ambiguities and contradictions that make the situation defined by the person an issue for him, rather than a routine difficulty.

In the formulation of a problem in this way, an event is relevant, or matters, because it is believed directly or indirectly to have ramifications for the values salient to the problem. In a social world, we would expect that

some of a person's theories about the relevant content of his problem to include beliefs about how the attitudes and actions of other human beings have ramifications for those values. It is in this way that we have a theoretical framework for understanding the construction of the significance of others in a problem. "...an event matters because it has consequences for values" (Eden, Jones and Sims, p.42). So people matter because what they do (or do not do) is seen to currently, or potentially have consequences for values, in particular for the attainment of the desired ends that are a reflection of values and believed to be the basis for removing the problem.

As described in the last chapter, our approach in this project was to adopt the roles, not of 'expert problem solvers', but as facilitators of Robert and Janet making explicit, analysing, and developing their own knowledge and experience about their problem-reality. Indeed, without paying considerable attention to their formulation of their issue we could not have offered useful and credible help to them, for their world was entirely foreign to us. Robert and Janet did have a rich and complex body of theories about the causes and consequences of events in their world, about those things holding the unsatisfactory current situation 'in place', and thus what would have to be changed if they were to move towards their image of a preferred future. Many of these theories did centre on the actions and attitudes of particular groups. The cognitive map on page 3.9 shows some of these theories, not only the beliefs about the blacks that were discussed earlier, but also those about the role of teachers, whose attitudes were seen to exacerbate the difficulties of black

kids at school, within an education syllabus that did not teach any black history and culture; and "professed Rastas" whose philosophy of "laziness...against education" was believed to have a deleterious affect on some of the kids' attitudes to school and education and contributed to a "negative" rather than "positive" black consciousness. There were many others, individuals as well as groups, whose attitudes and actions were seen to hold the current situation in place and/or potentially help move the situation in a preferred direction.

It is within this framework, of seeing problem-significant others as those who are seen, in various ways, to have implications for problem-salient values-( some of whom may also be the conceptually distinguishable category of those integral to ends and intrinsically valued means in the value system as "those for whom I have a conception of a preferred state of existence")-that the remaining chapters are set. The question " How can we understand the process by which some others become defined as significant in a policy problem?" can be developed to "On what bases, or for what reasons, within the context of his theories about the causes and consequences of events in his problem-reality, might a policy maker define others as significant in his issue?" Thus the next two chapters will explore the central significance for Robert and Janet of those seen by them as having the power to help or hinder the attainment of their objectives.

Chapter Seven will discuss the importance of Robert and Janet's self-image values -their role identities (McCall and Simmons, (1966)- as part of the salient value system in their issue,

and underlining the significance of those whom they categorized as their trusted allies, those who "are 100% with us" and intensely disliked opponents, those who "are trying to nullify what we are doing" in their efforts to help the kids. In defining another as significant in a problem situation because, for example, that person might support or hinder the attainment of relevant objectives is to be engaged in a process of prediction and inference, based on some theories or model of the other. Thus, finally, Chapters Eight and Nine will go on to consider this aspect of the way a person theorizes about others in his construction of their significance in his problem, including how:

"..the fact that the interrelation is with another person and not an object means that the psychological world of the other person as seen by the subject must enter into the analysis. Generally, a person reacts to what he thinks the other person is perceiving, feeling, and thinking, in addition to what the other person may be doing. In other words, the presumed events inside the other person's skin usually enter as essential features of the relation." (Heider, 1958, p.2)

## CONCLUSION

Of course it seems trivially obvious that a person's problem-significant others are those whose attitudes and actions are construed by him to have ramifications for the values at the centre of his problem definition. At this point, however, it is worth re-emphasising that this chapter has been discussing the construction of the significance of others, through the bringing to bear upon the definition and formulation of a problem of a personal framework of beliefs and values. As Sims (1979) points out about the nature of problems:

"Persons may differ in whether they consider there to be a problem in the situation at a particular time...Individuals...may differ on how they understand or diagnose a



problem, even when there is a consensus that a problem exists..(and)..in the elements of the situation which they see as being relevant to a problem.Even when persons..agree that a problem exists and understand that problem as being about the same discrepancy, they may differ in how they see the other elements of the situation to be related to the problem...We expect persons to differ on what aspects of a situation they accept as being admissable to manipulate in response to the situation.Persons have differing ethical views, differing value systems, and differing belief systems. (pp914-915)

Although in the succeeding chapters I shall suggest that we can have some expectations about the construction of the significance of others by policy makers considering a complex problem, it will also be a consistent theme that these are most usefully seen as 'sensitizing' devices. For those who attempt to offer help to policy makers with their problems, these sensitizing expectations will need to be set within the context of careful learning about who are the clients' particular problem-significant others, in their particular world, and why, and with what consequences for them.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF POWER(i):POWERFUL OTHERS

#### INTRODUCTION

In 1913 Walter Lippmann asserted that "to talk about politics without reference to human beings ... is just the deepest error in our political thinking." (p.2). This brief statement, set within a perspective of seeing policy-making in organizations as a political process, summarizes the central idea behind this research; that human beings are likely to be crucial elements in a policy-maker's thinking about his complex policy problems. In this part of the research findings I wish to turn this quote around and to show how, in this case, defining the significance of others centrally involved theorizing about power and politics.

The two participants in this research began with no formal organizational base, no resources, and few contacts - in short, nothing but their own commitment, energy and will. From their first meeting with us they were quite clear that they wanted help from others who had the power base and resources they knew they lacked. "We must find the people who have the things we need, and we must find the ones who these people look up to. They are the ones who have the most contribution to make if we are to find a way through." declared Robert. It was not long after the project began that Robert and Janet became immersed in the intense, and for them often heart-rending, internal politics of their voluntary group. They fretted at their relative powerlessness within the group, and, encouraged by us, began to think of ways to increase their own influence within it. The difficulties of so doing lead them to consider not only the power of those whom they saw as having "the most

contribution to make if we are to find a way through," but also of those whom they defined as "can nullify what we are doing".

Those who "have the most contribution to make if we are to find a way through" and those who "can nullify what we are doing" represented two categories of problem-significant others for Robert and Janet in terms of their perceived power to help or hinder the attainment of their objectives. Their conceptions of the nature and bases of others' power were complex and in the next two chapters I shall explore the different ways in which Robert and Janet thought others had the power to help or hinder them. Although I shall make reference to the literature where appropriate, my approach will initially be primarily descriptive, with comments on more general and practical significance drawn together after the description.

In this 'comment' I shall be arguing for taking seriously a view of attributions of power as intersubjective constructions of reality. I use the concept 'intersubjective' in preference to 'social' because it connotes more accurately the character of the construction of power I shall explore - in part shared with others, and in part idiosyncratic:

"For ourselves we find that it is best to conceive the world as being individually constructed, with each person's reality being separate and distinctive, and yet with that reality not being so far detached from other persons' realities as to be incomprehensible to them. Usually we find that persons believe their separate realities not to be so far unrelated to one another that they cannot talk, debate, argue, negotiate across those separate and different realities. Indeed, there are some points at which different persons' realities resemble each other so

closely that we can speak as if they were matters of objective fact." (Eden, Jones, Sims and Smithin, 1981, p. 39)

Thus, I shall show how there was a great deal in Robert and Janet's attributions of power that can be related to ideas existing in the literature, and indeed what many of us would find recognizable in our own organizational worlds. I shall also show, nevertheless, that there was much that was idiosyncratic to them - to their particular experiences, concerns, beliefs and values about the world. I shall also show that their attributions about powerful others were, to use Lukes' (1974) words, "ineradicably value-dependent" (p. 26).

As Ball (1972) points out about Thomas and Thomas' concept of the definition of the situation, to see attributions and meanings of power in this way seems almost commonsensically obvious. Yet it is not obvious to many writers about power, who are engaged in furious debates about what power 'really' is, and how an exercise of power can be measured, taking the standpoint of objective observers of power relationships between third parties whose own construction of power and power relationships are not explored. I shall also suggest that taking a view of attributions of power as intersubjective constructions has important implications for practice. That is, for the practice of consultants who ask their clients about any powerful others within their problem situation; and for policy makers who wish to understand, within complex networks of relationships, the beliefs of his powerful significant others about their own (including himself). There is also the awareness of complexity in such

a perspective, bringing with it an implication for the likely relevance of techniques and approaches to assist with the conduct and management of analysis and dialogue about powerful significant others in a policy problem.

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THOSE WHO CAN DISPOSE NEEDED RESOURCES ("those who have the  
the things we need")

Bacharach and Lawler (1980) place the struggle for control of resources at the centre of their definition of organizational politics - "the tactical use of power to retain or obtain control of real or symbolic resources" (p.1). That power comes from controlling resources that others need is a basic tenet of the proponents of social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964, 1974, Emerson, 1962, 1972, Thibaut and Kelley 1959, Kelley and Thibaut, 1978). Pettigrew (1977) offers one elaboration of these ideas as follows:

"Political behaviour is that ... by individuals or - in collective terms - sub-groups within an organization that makes a claim against the resource-sharing system of the organization. Decisions about the formulation of new strategy or the maintenance of the old are, to a greater or lesser degree, likely to threaten the existing distribution of organizational resources as represented in salaries, in promotion opportunities, and in control of tasks, people, information, and new areas of a business." (p.81)

In Robert and Janets' case there was no organization of which they were members with some pool of resources to be fought over. Nevertheless the problem of how to obtain the resources they needed dogged them throughout this project. They had a goal, that of setting up a training workshop; - where unemployed kids could train in particular trades; where some of these kids might feel encouraged to go on to technical college to obtain paper qualifications; and where the kids could develop a new self-confidence and commitment to go out and look for

jobs once again. To do this Robert and Janet needed to find premises, equipment, and above all money. Most of their time and energy during the year of this research was spent in trying to identify those who had these resources, and then trying to persuade them to part with some. They wrote hundreds of letters, tramped many miles, to scores of meetings.

Thus in this case, as undoubtedly in many others, an almost trivially obvious category of problem-significant others for Robert and Janet were those who were believed by them to have the power to dispose of the resources they needed, in local companies, other community organizations, grant-holding bodies such as the Manpower Services Commission, the Community Relations Council, and many others. The word "needed" is used because it was the way they labelled this category: "We must find those who have the things we need." (Robert); "we have to talk to the M.S.C because they can give us what we need" (Janet) For them, influencing this category of significant others was a 'sine-qua-non' of success; obvious but central.

It was also central in the sense of its being a focus, as I have described, of so much time, anxiety and disappointment. It is difficult to capture here the flat despair, for example, which accompanied their announcements to us when, after several months of ceaseless effort, they had collected less than £500, and when they were told that the application of their voluntary group for a grant from the M.S.C. had been turned down, or when, just before the training workshop was about to be opened, they heard that their grant from the C.R.C. had been cut by two-thirds. This was also a central category in that it defined the significance of other actors. For others were seen to be

significant because they were believed to be those who could help Robert and Janet influence "those who have the things we need".

THOSE WHO CAN GIVE CONNECTION POWER ("those who will make people listen to us")

How did Robert and Janet think others might help them to influence those with the power to dispose of needed resources? To answer this, we need to understand something of their beliefs about themselves. For both of them a key construct which they used in considering, and differentiating between, others, was whether or not the others did or would listen to them. Both Robert and Janet were clear that somehow they had to get other people to listen to them, to take cognizance of and to share, at least in part, their problem.

"People must listen, they must see the problem" (Robert)

"We have to get them (those who have the things we need) to listen to us, to have empathy." (Janet)

Both of them, albeit for different reasons, felt that it was highly unlikely that others would listen to them without others' support. Thus, for example, Janet, when considering the possibility of the pair of them making an application to the M.S.C. for a grant argued that "they (the representatives of the M.S.C.) won't listen to us on our own." Both Robert and Janet asserted strongly at the beginning of the project that they needed to associate those whom they regarded as occupying social roles having some status, influence, in colloquial terms 'clout', in their community, such as the local MP, councillors, Ministers of the Church and other prominent citizens in the area. Robert called this category, comprising those whom they felt, in some general way, to have some power and standing

in the community, "those at the highest step" or "the hierachy".

Robert was black, relatively poor, once an electrician, now a part-time youth leader, lacking in any formal qualifications. Janet was barely out of her teens, a just qualified teacher, unemployed in order that she could give all her time to the project. Robert described themselves as being "at the lowest step". He argued that:

"We need to talk to the hierachy, those at the highest step. We are at the lowest step, we cannot get what we want without help from people like these."

"We must find the right people, the people that they (those that have the things we need) look up to".

Robert's sense of powerlessness was also strongly embedded in a sense of inadequacy because of his lack of qualifications and "cleverness". Thus, for example, when comparing himself with another he said:

"When I compare myself with him, I am not foolish, but I am not clever. What makes a man clever are the qualifications he has got, the reading he has done. He has the flow of words. He can talk to the hierachy whereas I do not have the flow of words. He can understand the hierachy while I have got to think out the way the words are used."

With Janet it was her youth and inexperience that she felt to be a particular problem. She complained frequently that:

"People don't take me seriously. They see me as young and inexperienced."

Janet summed up both their feelings about how associating with more influential people could help them, when she explained why



she thought they had to go to talk to people like the local M.P. and persuade them to state their support for the venture.

"It will make people listen to us more if they know these people are behind us"

Thus Robert and Janet were seeking help from powerful others of the kind that Allison (1971) describes when he asserts that: "the sources of bargaining advantages include ... access to and a persuasiveness with players who have bargaining advantages" (p.170). ; or, to use the concept of Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer, (1979), they wanted to gain 'connection power':

'... based on connections with influential or important people. A leader high in connection power induces compliance from others because they try to gain favour or avoid disfavour of the powerful connection.' (p.419)

THOSE WITH FORMAL AUTHORITY OVER

THOSE WHO CAN DISPOSE NEEDED RESOURCES ("those who have official post power")

I have said that Robert and Janets' concept of power was a complicated one and that there were several ways in which they conceived of others giving them some connection power. One was through association with those whom they described as having "official post power" over those whom they were approaching for financial assistance. As their label suggests, "official post power" was for Robert and Janet that coming from a particular position or role within the formal authority structure of an organization. Thus when their group's negotiations with the M.S.C and the Youth Service for a grant appeared to be foundering, both Robert and Janet came to the conclusion that they needed to talk to others higher in the hierarchy who would intervene on their behalf;

"I think we must write to Mr. C. He is their boss, and he can tell them what to do" (Robert)

"Dr. T .. [One of the M.S.C. representatives] does not want to help, but I agree that if we can get to Mr. C .. it won't matter, he will have to help us." (Janet)

They were delighted when a contact with a minister of the church led to a letter of introduction and then a meeting with a more senior member of Youth Service they had also been dealing with. This person, Mr. P .. , promised to consider whether or not to use his influence to help them and after this meeting Robert and Janet were elated:

"Mr. P .. is involved with us now, he was told by Mr. W .. to get involved. The way we see it, if we can get Mr. P .. and Mr. W .. on our side, then we can forget about these other people who do not want to help us." (Robert)

The above quotes show how the meaning of "official post power" to Robert and Janet was not only that it came from a formal structural relationship within an organization but also that it involved the idea of a right to demand mandatory compliance from others. Official post power was thus that form of power which Bacharach and Lawler (1980) describe as authority. (See also Bierstedt, 1974, and Weber's, 1947, concept of rational-legal authority)

'The unique aspect of authority is that subordinates acquiesce without question and are willing to (1) suspend any intellectual or moral judgments about the appropriateness of the superior's directives, or (2) act as if they subscribe to the judgments of the superior even if, in fact, they personally find the directive distasteful, irrational, or morally suspect .. An individual has authority when he or she can obtain unquestioning obedience from subordinates.' (pp 28-29)

As Mangham (1979) somewhat less formally puts it, it is the power "of the boss" which most of us who work in and around organizations take cognizance of in that context,

where, as Bacharach and Lawler also point out:

"The foundation of any formal organization is ultimately coercive. This coercive foundation may be shrouded in rules and informal norms that make "might right". However hidden, the coercive element is still there in one form or another." (p. 175)

THOSE WHO HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD ("those who have  
AND GIVEN WEIGHT respect power")

Robert and Janet specifically contrasted "official-post" power with what they called "respect power", not based in a formal structural relationship, not requiring mandatory obedience, but awesome to them nevertheless; for those with "respect power" were those whom, unlike them, people "listened to", giving their opinions and requests weight. "Oh yes, he has respect power. People always listen to him." (Janet). "He has respect. People look up to him, they listen to the things he says." (Robert).

(i) Role Source of Respect Power

As I have already shown, Robert and Janet believed that certain social positions carried with them a particular status, and one source of "respect power" was a person's social role. For them the archetypal "respect power" role that of a minister of the church. Thus, for example,

"I think we must get help from ministers of the church. They are always our best bet. People respect them, I think they have such a force." (Robert).

"I agree. I think people do have respect for ministers." (Janet)

Robert and Janet, in their conception of "respect power" derived from role, were proposing the existence of some

informal set of societal relationships in which some individuals were seen as having the legitimate right to be heard and accorded weight. The nearest idea in the existing literature to this conception is that of authority where it is used in a wider sense than that embodied in some formalized organizational structure or set of rules. (e.g. Weber 1947 ; also Easton, 1958, Friedrich, 1958, Wrong, 1979, Sennet, 1980).

However, most conceptions of authority, even in its wider sense, involve the idea that it is the legitimate right to command obedience.

"... the essence of authority is the issuance of commands. ... In persuasion, B adopts A's communication as the basis of his own conduct because of the content of the communication, which he has independently evaluated and accepted. In authority, it is not the content of a communication but its source, that is, the perceived status, resources or personal attributes of the communicator, which induces compliance ... Any and all command-obedience relations between men are examples of authority."  
(Wrong, 1979, p. 35)

Robert and Janet did not see "respect power" from role in command-obedience terms. For them it had to do with legitimated rights to decision-making, and if we substitute the notion of 'right to be heard and given weight' for "right to make the final decision", Bacharach and Lawler (1980) come nearest to expressing this **as follows**:

"As Weber (1947) indicates, legitimacy is a belief, that is, a belief in the appropriateness of the authority structure. Judgements about that appropriateness might be based on moral values, normative ideas, or pragmatic or utilitarian criteria. In any case legitimacy implies that subordinates accept not just the authority of a superior but also the rationale or justification (implicit or explicit) for attaching authority to certain positions

and their occupants ... Since authority is the right to make the final decision, legitimacy refers specifically to beliefs about rights of decision-making." (p. 39).

It is when we come to this idea of respect power that it is possible to elaborate further the significance of association with powerful others to Robert and Janet. They felt themselves to be powerless, to be the sort of people who would not be given weight, and not accorded 'legitimate rights of decision-making'. The importance of legitimacy in policy-making processes is expressed by Pettigrew (1977) as follows:

"In considering what demand is presented and how it is presented and later modified, issues of legitimacy are likely to be crucial. Legitimacy is a highly diffuse and movable resource, but one whose significance and unequal distribution can structure decisional outcomes. Politics concerns the creation of legitimacy for certain ideas, values and demands - not just actions formed as a result of previously acquired legitimacy." (p. 85).

To use Allison's (1971) notion of organizational politics as a 'central, competitive game', Robert and Janet believed that association with others who had legitimated rights to be heard, and their opinions given weight, would enhance the legitimacy of their demand and, even more importantly, their own acceptance as legitimate players in their own political game for making that demand.

#### (ii) Respect Power from Personal Characteristics

Robert and Janet also felt that a person could have respect power not because (or not solely because) of his social role but because of the strength of his personality melded with a particular attributed competence and wisdom about

the world.

"He doesn't say much but what he does say, is always sensible. People know that what he says is never foolish, and they listen to him out of respect." ...

"I respect the man. He can make sense out of my nonsense." (Robert)

"He has a way of talking, a way of looking that makes people stop and listen to him" ... "He is the sort of person people respect. He always knows the right thing to do." (Janet)

As Robert and Janet became aware of networks of relationships that existed in their community, they felt that those whose assistance they needed would be more likely to give that assistance if they knew that Robert and Janet were supported by people whose competence and wisdom they themselves respected.

The idea that personal characteristics, are a source of power is clearly reflected in the existing power literature. The most famous is of course Weber's (1947) concept of charisma - "resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or gained by him (charismatic authority)." Somewhat less dramatically, Pettigrew (1973) describes as a power base a person's reputation and image, his "assessed stature". Bacharach and Lawler (1980) provide the following description of personal characteristics as a source of power:

"As Weber indicates, the charismatic leader has power by virtue of extraordinary and often mystical

characteristics. However, relevant personal characteristics might also include verbal skill, ability to argue effectively for positions, or even physical attributes (for example, a physical disability of a veteran espousing a pro- or anti-war position). In the organizational literature, personal characteristics are typically treated under the construct leadership. Leadership encompasses the personal abilities and characteristics that key individuals have apart from their offices or other sources of power." (p. 35)

However, Bacharach and Lawler distinguish between personal characteristics and expertise as two separate sources of power. Expertise they suggest is the specialized information a person has that is needed by others and it has often been cited as a base of power which is distinct from personal characteristics. (e.g. French and Raven, 1959, Pettigrew, 1973, Raven, 1974). For Robert and Janet, however, expertise about how best to deal with particular problems was one aspect of 'personal' respect power. It is Wrong (1979) who offers a conception which most closely approximates theirs, in his notion of competent authority:

"Competent authority is a power relation in which the subject obeys the directives of the authority out of belief in the authority's superior competence or expertise to decide which actions will best serve the subject's interests and goals. ... I mean here by 'competent authority' authority that rests solely on the subject's belief in the superior knowledge or skill of the exerciser rather than on formal position in a recognised hierarchy or authority". (p. 53).

### (iii) The Sanctioning Aspect of Respect Power

Unlike "official-post power" respect power did not involve a right to mandatory obedience. Rather a person who had respect power would have, in their eyes, a high probability of obtaining what he wanted from others primarily because others voluntarily and willingly gave weight to their views. In this way their conception was a mix of what Wrong (1979),

quoted earlier, classifies as distinct - persuasion (compliance because of the content of a communication), and authority (compliance because of its source).

Somebody who had personal "respect power" was often also described as being liked: "People respect and like him" (Janet). However, Robert and Janet also believed that respect power could be backed by the threat of sanctions which could lead a person to comply even unwillingly. Thus, for example, Robert believed that ministers of the church could exert the potential sanction of arousing public disapproval:

"A minister of the church is a leader. He leads a christian life which is universally accepted. He can go on the television and tell these politicians that they must do something about the economic conditions that are keeping people down. I think they have a force such as this".

This sanctioning power of respected others was one, for example, which he felt could not only be used to put pressure on those who "have the things we need" but also offer him protection from being sacked by his own employers for his activities in trying to get an additional facility for unemployed kids.

"It is a sort of knife-edge I am on, for the steps I may have to take in time may mean that I have got to be got rid of. If I get the support of Mr. P., Rev. B., Mr. T., (those with respect power) I won't be afraid to write to Mr. C., because if he sacked me, these people would want to know why."



He also explained the reluctance of one of the voluntary groups to become involved with the Council of Churches as because "There is something about these people, ministers of the church, I think he is afraid of". In this way, for Robert, respect power was also something akin to Sennet's (1980) concept of authority, as follows:

"Assurance, superior judgement, the ability to impose discipline, the capacity to inspire fear: these are the qualities of authority. In 1484, Caxton expressed them succinctly in his salutation to King Richard III in the Chivalry: "My most redoubted natural and most dreaded sovereign Lord, King Richard." The word "dreaded" has a doubled meaning. It conveys both fear and awe. An authority, in Caxton's sense, is dreaded." (pp. 17-18).

Even the most willing acceptance of the weight of a person with respect power because of his valued and liked personal characteristics and abilities was seen to have some potential sanctioning power. Thus, when talking about the relationship between one who had respect power and a member of the Youth Service, Janet asserted that:

"He and Mr. P. ... are friends and Mr. P. ... respects him. I do not think that Mr. P.... will want to make him angry."

There Janet was recognizing the point made by Walster and Abrahams (1972) who argue that:

"Interpersonal attraction and social influence are so intimately related that if one understands each process, we can probably intuit the relationships between them" (p. 223) ... "The idea that our friends might cease to like us is very threatening. Thus, when they wish to influence us, friends have an especially valuable resource available to them. A friend can hint that he will continue to like us only if we continue to comply with his wishes ... (p. 226; see also Kelley and Thibaut, 1978, and French and Ravens, 1959, concept of "referent power".)

In their belief that "respect power" could, if necessary, be backed by sanctions, to their benefit, Robert and Janet were recognizing the point made by Wrong (1979) that: "It is ... to the advantage of a power holder to extend and diversify the forms of power he exercises over a given power subject" (p. 71).

(iv) Respect Power: A Complex Concept

That a person may 'call on' several forms and bases of power in a power relationship is one of the complexities surrounding the concept. The complexity of the concept of power is remarked upon by most of those who write about it. Typically it is managed through the formulation of analytical classifications and taxonomies. Of these Wrong comments that "... one still finds, even among supposedly sophisticated social scientists, a tendency to assume naively that there must be a one-to-one correspondence between observed phenomena and definitional categories." (p. 67). He points out how:

"... in reality the forms of influence and power shade into one another along several axes or continua from the non-social uses of force and manipulation to a near-complete fusion of will and purpose between power holder and power subject ... in reality most power relations are mixed, exhibiting qualities of contrasted types interwoven into an apparently inseparable blend." (pp. 66-67).

In a way that is entirely cogent to Robert and Janet's concept of respect power, Wrong also points out how persuasion and authority are often mixed forms of power in actuality:

"It is possible to find in reality clear-cut examples of each, but the ambivalent, overdetermined and multi-layered nature of most human motivations ensures that many - probably most - actual instances of apparent persuasion or authority will turn out to be mixed or

border-line cases". (p. 67)

I have already shown how there was no neat 'fit' of the concept of "respect power" with existing categories. It was a concept which was, rather, a complex mix and redefinition of a number of such categories. It is one example of their own intersubjective construction of the meaning and significance of power relationships.

THOSE WHO CAN SUBORN MY SUPPORT ("those who can turn people against us")

At the beginning of the project Robert and Janet were members of a voluntary group, consisting of a number of middle class whites who had come together to form an action group to help unemployed kids in the area. Soon after the beginning of the project Robert and Janet expressed increasing frustration and anger at what they saw as unfair exclusion from the decision-making processes of the group, particularly by what they termed "the private sector" consisting of the Chairman and two others. They felt angry that they were expected to do most of the fund-raising tasks of the group, while yet being ignored in its policy-making process.

"We are doing all this work, and the people we are going to for money are asking us questions that we cannot answer. But when we go and ask T.. for information, he just avoids it, with roundabout talk. This private sector of M.. and S.. and T.. are always whispering. When we go up to them they stop talking and sort of look, as if to say, "we mustn't tell them what we are saying!"" (Robert)

"We feel as if we don't know who to trust. We don't know who is sincere and who is false". (Janet)

"They have changed. They were our friends. Now we don't know any more." (Janet)

Such was his sense of anxiety and distrust that Robert soon became convinced that "this private sector, they are trying to nullify what we are doing". He became convinced that they did not "care about the kids", were involved in the group purely for political and personal ends - "they are not doing it from deep down like us, they are doing it for themselves" - and above all wanted to prevent them from having any influence in the group or elsewhere. Although Janet was initially reluctant to agree with this, nevertheless, she too eventually became convinced that "they are trying to get rid of us".

Thus both of them began to consider the various ways in which "those who are trying to nullify what we are doing" might have the power to do so. Most particularly they were concerned by the power to potentially suborn the support of others through defining and redefining their conceptions of Robert and Janet.

(ii) Those Who Can Define Reality ("those who can get  
For Others pawns always to agree")

The Chairman of their voluntary group was significant for them because they felt that he had a particular powerful personality combined with a high level of competence and network of contacts which led to his domination of most of the other members of the group. This, they felt, made it

particularly difficult for them to increase their own power in the group, and indeed, now that the Chairman, with "the private sector" had turned against them, likely to result in their ostracism in the group. Robert described how his facility with words and argument had meant he could control the 'definition of reality' of most of the group members, so that they would be behind him in his rejection of Robert and Janet.

"He has the flow of words. He has a way of talking that makes them think he brings manna from heaven. If he does not like us, they will not like us as well" (Robert)

"He has made them think the group cannot do without him. I think he has turned them against us" (Janet)

However, the relationship between the Chairman and most of the other members of the group was not explained for them purely in terms of the personality and manipulative skill of the Chairman. Both of them felt his power was facilitated by the weakness of the others. Robert said vehemently: "They are stupid. They do not see him for what he really is". Janet used the word "pawns" to describe those who were what they both called "easily led". "They are just pawns. They don't have minds of their own; They always end up agreeing with T.. and doing what he wants."

Here we see Robert and Janet considering power in the terms suggested by Hall (1972) who argues that power involves getting:

"... others to accept your view and perspective. This is achieved by controlling, influencing, and sustaining your definition of the situation, since, if you can get others to share your reality, you can get them to act in the manner you prescribe." (p.51)

Lukes (1974) goes even further than Hall. He argues that prevailing conceptions of power, by emphasizing an observable and identifiable conflict of values between the influencer and the influenced, miss a fundamental "third dimension" of power. For, he argues:

"... A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed, is not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have - that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? ... the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent ... conflict from arising in the first place." (p. 23)

Lukes' conception of power is that " ... A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests"(p. 34). In the "third dimension" of power he makes a distinction between a person's subjective interests and his "real" interests, reflected in the choices and actions he would have made had he the autonomous awareness that this exercise of power denies him. Lukes ideas have been criticised strongly (see,e.g.,Bradshaw,1976, MacDonald, 1976,Young,1978) in particular for the empirical difficulty, which he himself acknowledges, of identifying the "relevant counterfactual" - what a person's real interests are. Indeed, whether or not power relationships must involve a conflict, overt or latent, of values is one of the significant controversies in the power literature and Bacharach and Baratz (1970) speak for the 'majority' view when they assert that "

"Suppose the observer can uncover no grievances, no actual or potential demands for change? Suppose, in other words, there appears to be universal acquiescence in the status quo. Is it possible, in such circumstances to determine empirically whether the consensus is genuine or instead has been enforced through non-decision-making? The answer must be negative. Analysis

of this problem is beyond the reach of a political analyst and perhaps can only be fruitfully analyzed by a philosopher." (p.49)

Yet it seems to me that it is not uncommon for individuals to attribute exercises of power to states of affairs which are advantageous to some and disadvantageous to others, regardless of whether or not the "disadvantaged" would agree that they are disadvantaged, often with calls for 'consciousness-raising' of some kind. As Lukes points out " ... the notion of 'interests' is an irreducibly evaluative notion ... talk of interests provides a licence for the making of normative judgements of a moral and political character." (p. 34)

The value-laden aspect of constructions of power is another feature of their complexity, with often significant consequent differences between individuals about the meaning and significance of power and power relations. In their conception of a power relationship between a powerful personality and "pawns", Robert and Janet were indeed being highly evaluative and moving very close to a construction of power which included Lukes' third dimension. Yet here too there was no neat fit, for in their condemnation of "pawns ... without minds of their own" for their inability to see the Chairman as he 'really is' they were assuming that there was the possibility of choice, of alternative constructions of him.

There was another dimension of evaluative complexity here too. The bases of the manipulative power of the Chairman were in actuality extremely close to that which gave, for Robert and Janet, a person one form of "respect power" - a

strong personality, a facility with words and argument, a competence in knowing 'what to do'. Indeed Janet said of the Chairman "he knows everybody and everything". Yet they resented and disapproved of his power - and it was not, therefore, for them based on respect. I shall return to this feature of their constructions of power in the next chapter.

As a final point, here, however, the evaluative aspect of their thinking about powerful others can also be related to the inherent complexity of power relationships (as opposed to static taxonomies of forms and bases of power) that they can involve changing constructions of others. Although for most of the project Robert and Janet saw the Chairman's power in negative terms, at the very beginning of it before they started to find themselves confronted and opposed, they did not. I strongly suspect that in the early days he would have been seen by them as having respect power.

(ii) Gatekeepers in Specific Communication Links ("those who can give the wrong information")

In his case study of a computer purchase decision, Pettigrew (1973) describes how one individual occupied a key 'gatekeeper' position mediating the flow of information from various potential suppliers to the company directors. This position enabled him to feed and redefine particular information in particular ways to his own advantage in the decision-making process.

The control of information has frequently been described as



a base of power (e.g. Etzioni, 1961, Easton, 1965, Bailey, 1969, Raven, 1974, Bacharach and Lawler, 1980) and is often linked to its source in terms of position, formal or informal, in particular networks of relationships. The manipulative power of the Chairman for Robert and Janet of course involved notions of information control and indeed his position as Chairman. As Janet said "He is the Chairman of the group. The group has to listen to him anyway". However, the source of his reality-defining power for most of the members of the group was not merely 'positional' and was based, for Robert and Janet, on the "pawn"-like characters of the others. At the same time, the possibility of his redefining information about them because of the occupancy of a particular gatekeeper position in networks of contacts with those who were not necessarily "pawns" was a matter of considerable anxiety.

Thus, for example, there was one member of the voluntary group whom they felt had "respect power", who appeared not to be part of the "private sector" and whose support they felt would be extremely valuable. They became convinced that this person might be turned against them by the Chairman of the group, through whom most communications to the other were usually channelled. They decided they needed to change the situation -

"Whereas before when we had problems we would phone T.. and he would phone M.., now we want to phone M.. direct because God knows what T.. will say to M.." (Robert.)  
"I agree, I don't think we can let T.. go on talking to M.., we must contact M.. directly ourselves. T.. could definitely give him the wrong information"(Janet)

Another example of the significance of a person's gate-keeper role was Robert's suspicion about one member of the "private sector", who was also employed by the Youth Service. Robert felt that he was merely manipulating the group to suit his own ends, which were not to obtain a training workshop for unemployed kids.

"I am suspicious of him, he is playing a love and hate game. He is interested in the workshop only to help his side, to get his own education thing set up. He will sell to the highest bidder, and we are not the highest bidder. Where he shows his power, is when we go to the Youth Service. Who knows if he is giving us the right information?"

(iii) Those With Central Political Access  
and Assessed Stature ("those who have the power to make or break")

Robert and Janet were strongly aware of the Chairman's contacts outside the group. Thus although they resented the Chairman they felt initially that there was a limit to how much they could alienate him. Janet explained:

"But I just don't think we can afford to make T.. angry. He just knows everybody, more people than I think even we know about."

Later, when Robert and Janet began to establish their own separate network of contacts, their fear of the Chairman's power of this kind diminished, only to be transferred to another. There was a particularly active and well known member of the community, a minister of the church, who had in the past done a great deal to help Robert and Janet. However, at one point in the relationship this individual

began to express some criticisms of their, in particular Robert's, ideas about the nature of the proposed workshop. He also expressed doubts about whether Robert would be a suitable person to manage the workshop. These criticisms strongly offended both Robert and Janet. What had been feelings of warmth and trust became those of suspicion and doubt. However, once again, there was also a concern that this person was too "dangerous" to alienate - and a fear even greater than that of the Chairman. For this individual was seen by them to have what Janet called "the power to make or break", a mix of respect power and a central position in various crucial influence networks in the community, that they felt they could not possibly compete with if the person chose to turn against them.

"He is not like Mr. P., Mr. P. has the power to make. Reverend B. definitely has the power to make or break. He just has so many contacts and everyone respects him. I will give him the benefit of the doubt that he will not work against us, but I think that we will have to be very careful about him. If he turns against us we would not stand a chance. I think he is indispensable to us" (Janet)

"I still respect the man, but he has changed and now I am a bit suspicious of him. He could be very dangerous." (Robert)

Interestingly Robert and Janet's feelings about this individual were those of doubt rather than outright rejection and perhaps this is why he was still seen to have respect power rather than reality-defining power over

people "without minds of their own" or "easily led". In their beliefs about their dependency, firstly upon the Chairman and then the minister, we also see here most clearly the dependency aspect of power relationships held to by social exchange theorists, including the strategy for reducing dependence of finding alternative suppliers of needed resources. The following quote from Blau (1964) is a fair typification of the exchange theory position:

"By supplying services in demand to others, a person establishes power over them. If he regularly renders needed services they cannot readily obtain elsewhere, others become dependent on and obligated to him for these services, and unless they can furnish other benefits to him that produce inter dependence by making him equally dependent on them, their unilateral dependence obligates them to comply with his requests lest he ceases to continue to meet their needs."  
(p. 118)

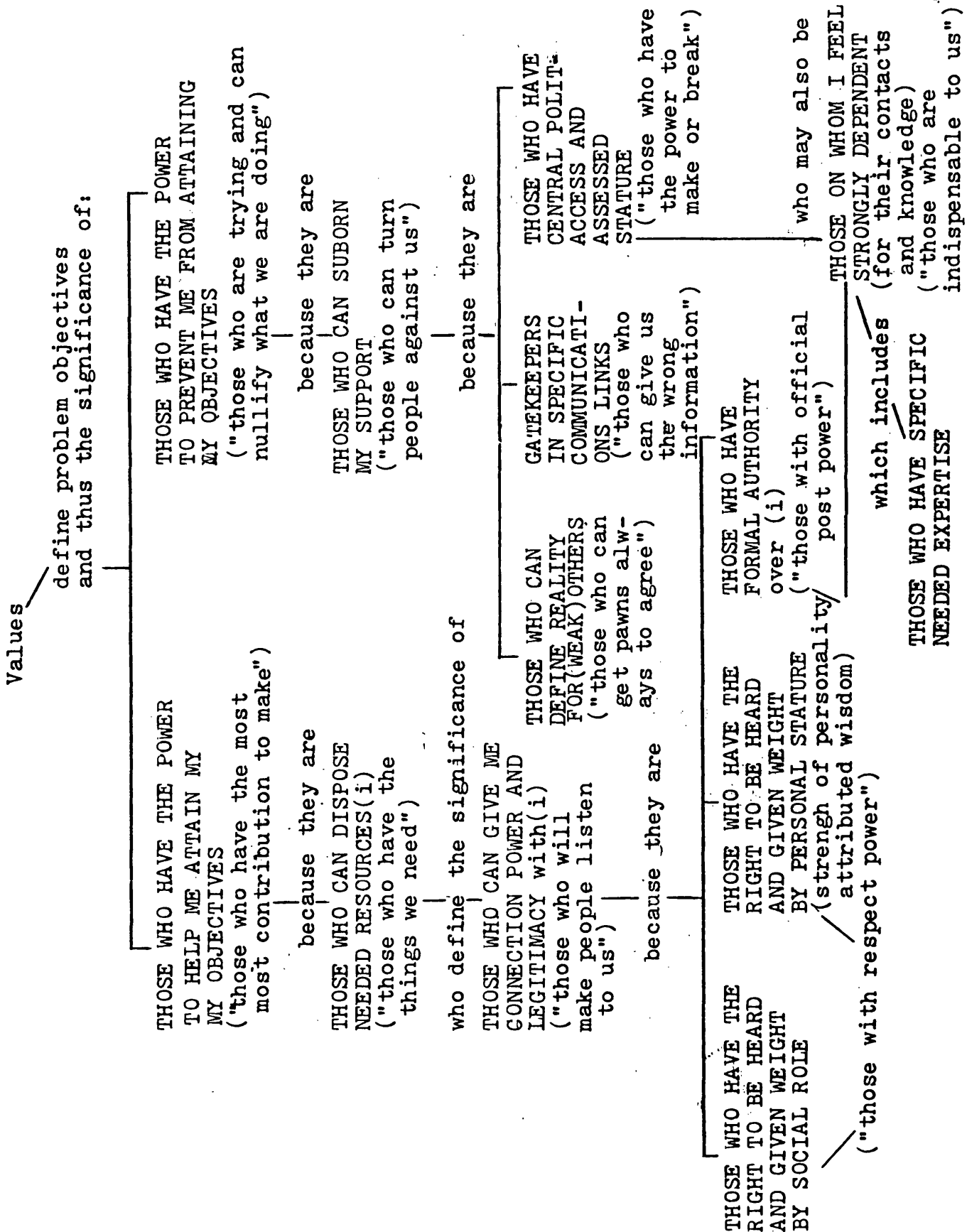
Even more significantly, however, the construction of a category of powerful others as those who are centrally embedded on an extensive and crucial influence network involved perhaps the most stark recognition by Robert and Janet of what was consistently manifested in their politics of attempting to influence events; that:

"The amount of support a person achieves in a situation is likely to be conditional on the structure and nature of his direct and indirect interpersonal relationships. The assumption is that, in a competitive demand-generating process, the decisional outcome will not necessarily be a product of the greater worthiness or weight of the issues ranged to uphold one or other demand in the dispute, but may result from the nature of the linkages that opposing parties have with the individuals for whose support they are competing."  
(Pettigrew, 1973, pp. 230-231).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(i) Categories of Powerful Problem-significant Others

We can summarize Robert and Janets' beliefs about, and differentiations between, the significance of their powerful others in terms of the schema of conceptual categories below:



(ii) Recognizability

I have used the term 'intersubjective' to conceptualize about attributions and constructions of power, and there is much in Robert and Janet's thinking about their powerful others which can readily be related to existing theory and what many would find recognizable in their organizational worlds. Robert and Janet defined others as significant who had the power to dispose of the material resources they needed. Indeed if the concept of resources is extended, most of Robert and Janet's powerful others were significant, and had power, because they were seen by them to have resources of one kind or another which they defined as important. As I have shown, a host of writers have placed ideas about the control and disposal of resources at the centre of theories about power and political relationships. I suggest that for most of us who live and work and try to influence events in organizations, it is a taken-for-granted part of our reality that individuals who have resources that we want, or are dependent on, have power with respect to us; and that processes of politicking often centre around the allocation of valued resources, whether these be money, equipment, staff, status, 'legitimacy' and so on.

Robert and Janet defined as powerful those whom they saw, and believed others saw, as having some superior competence and wisdom. They felt initially dependent upon the specific expertise of the chairman. The power of attributed knowledge and expertise has again been written about, experienced, and used by many in organizations who are, or rely on, such as accountants, computer specialists, corporate planners,

operational researchers, and so on. Wilensky (1967) suggests that "... information is a resource that symbolizes status, enhances authority and shapes careers." (p. 43), and this idea is captured vividly by Jones and Lakins' description of one of the key characters in their case-study, 'The Carpetmakers':

"Markland looked every inch an up-and-coming executive. He abounded with confidence and self-assurance; he gave the impression that he was a man of action who could also think. He could talk fluently, with apparent knowledge, about a wide variety of business topics ... The chairman could see that Markland had potential as an entrepreneur, but he was impressed most by his apparent mastery of all that was latest in management thinking. He might, the chairman thought, not be able to create an empire, but he looked like a man who would be able to manage one. Already a bright future seemed to be ahead of him at Total Furnishings". (pp. 13-14)

The power from knowledge has often been seen as one aspect of the power that comes from controlling information. Robert and Janet felt extremely anxious about the potentially damaging power of those who occupied 'gatekeeper' roles in crucial communications networks for the possibility this gave for the redefining of information about them, particularly when this was combined with the likelihood of that person being listened to and his opinions given weight. Indeed in their fear of being 'cut out of contention by those with the "power to make or break" we see something of that familiar 'writing-of-the-agenda' phenomenon described by Bachrach and Baratz (1970) as follows:

"Of course, power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. Power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only these issues

which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences." (p. 7)

It is not too far removed from notions of 'writing-the-agenda' though non-decision making, to recognizing the subtler aspects of defining reality proposed by Lukes' (1974) third dimension of power, which Robert and Janet approached in their conception of the manipulative power over pawns "who don't have minds of their own". It is a dimension of power, for example, which is also suggested in Mangham's (1979) notion of 'socialization' in organizations where, for example:

"Promotions signal the attributes, the values, definitions and outlooks prized by senior management and the daily round inexorably produces the circumstance where such taken-for-granted perspectives are internalized and acted upon. In no time at all the novitiates take on the colour of their organization; they learn what is expected of them, negotiate their working agreements within the overall framework provided by their peers and supervisors and gradually, imperceptibly, the 'Bloggs way of doing things' becomes second nature to them". (p. 80)

As the quote suggests, part of the process of socialization within an organization is learning about the frequently historic, accreted body of rules, procedures and norms about what is 'right and proper', or legitimate to do and not to do, to say and not to say in an organization. Most of us who work in them are as aware as Robert and Janet were of the importance of legitimacy, and the legitimation of our activities and demands, if we are to be successful in attaining our ends. Nor, more generally, do we find it difficult to understand why they believed themselves to be



the types of people who would not carry much weight in their community, because we recognise that structural aspect of power and power relations in our society.

Finally, we also recognise in our organizational worlds the reality of the power of "the boss", those whom Robert and Janet defined as having "official-post power", even if in the complex mix and dynamics of power relationships there are often a number of ways in which subordinates can obtain 'countervailing power in the relationship. As Bacharach and Lawler (1980) point out, this power is, while legitimated, also "ultimately coercive" (p. 175), attached to it, as there is, the disposal of significant rewards and punishments.

Thus, if we take Robert and Janets'"concrete" categories and concepts , those used by "the people being studied... to organize and interpret their experience, to construct their own world and give meaning to it"(Deising, 1972,p. 209)in isolation,we are not entitled to make assertions about wider generality.If we relate them to the mass of literature that also points to such features of power relationships as legitimacy and legitimation, attributed wisdom and expertise, 'gatekeeper positions and embeddedness in networks of influence, formal authority, defining reality, and so on, then we are entitled to see them as relevant sensitizing concepts for considering why and how policy-makers might construct the significance of some others in their problem-reality. We can also therefore see them as potential bases for dialogue between persons "who believe their separate realities not to be so far unrelated to one another that they cannot talk, debate,

argue, negotiate across those separate and different realities." (Eden, Jones, Sims and Smithin, 1981, p. 39).

(ii) A Basis for Dialogue and Analysis

It is the implications for conducting and structuring a complex dialogue in the practical life of policy-makers and consultants that I wish to consider here. The dialogue I refer to is that which a consultant might undertake with an individual client or a client team, or a team leader with the rest of his team, or a policy-maker with himself, as a basis for enquiry and analysis about who is a significant powerful other in a policy issue, and why, and with what consequences.

The concept of power and its manifestations in power relationships is complex and confusing. This is not merely because it seems elusive if one attempts what seems to me the ultimately unrewarding task of producing some brief, precise statement summing up what is meant by 'A exercises power over B'. More significantly any particular relationship may be interpreted by those involved, or those 'observing' it as a complex blend of a number of facets of power, with a number of bases of power and motivations for compliance. Thus, for example, in this case, the chairman of their group was seen by Robert and Janet in relation to several of the categories given earlier as I discussed- 'reality-defining' power for some of the group who were "pawns", occupying certain key gatekeeper positions, linked to wider political access, having expertise that they felt dependent on in the early stages of the project. One minister of the church had "respect power" (a blend of persuasion and authority as analytically distinguished in the

literature, with also the dimension of potentially being backed by sanctions, in addition to respect and liking) from both role and personal characteristics, and this combined with central political access gave him the "the power to make or break". Many analytical categories also overlap or shade subtly into one another, as, for example, in this case, where 'those who can give me connection power and legitimacy can potentially become 'those who can suborn my support' even though in terms of faithfulness to Robert and Janet's categorizations these were linked but distinguishable. The same applies to the categories 'gatekeeper positions' and 'central political access'; and no doubt respect power from role helpfully augmented respect power from personal characteristics. It also applies to many of the analytical categories in the literature, where, however, the predominant tendency is to insist on their conceptual clarity and distinctiveness..

On several occasions Robert and Janet expressed their own sense of confusion when attempting to think about the politics of their issue, and with this an urgent need to "sort out these people". Yet another dimension of complexity was that they were attempting to think, not about isolated dyadic relationships which tend to be the focus of much of the power literature, but rather about the networks of relationships in which these significant others were embedded, and thus about the consequences of taking action with respect to one person on their relationship with others.. One way in which we attempted to help with this was through network diagrams simply representing visually the relationships between the key actors by dashed lines of various thickness as an outcome

of the questions: "Who talks to whom?" and "How much?". This crude visual model immediately provided some help with identifying and considering who were the most central actors whom it would be useful to cultivate or dangerous to alienate. However, understanding 'Who talks to whom?' is only part of the story. There are occasions when it may be important and worth while for the purposes of accurate prediction to explore more fully the nature of the power relationships involved. For example, the power vested in some formal authority relation, what Robert and Janet called "official post power", may appear to offer the most predictable outcomes, of compliance by a subordinate to a superior. If, however, it is known that the superior in that relationship is dependent on the expert knowledge of the subordinate then he may be reluctant to use his essentially coercive power in ways that might be expected to be disliked by the latter. Similarly if it appears that the definitions of reality held by an actor who has the formal power to dispose of needed resources are 'informally significantly influenced or manipulated by another, then it is the other who would best be the target of influence efforts.

#### (iv) Some Questions

Thus, there are good reasons why any discussion of power-ful others in a complex problem would be helped by the attempt to manage, rather than be overwhelmed by, complexity. One way of coming to grips with a complex topic either for oneself, or with any others involved in the dialogue, is to be able to ask substantive questions about it that have some recognizable meaning in one's own world.

Each of the categories given earlier could be the basis for a question such as, for example, Who has control over the resources you need as 'a sine-qua non' for achieving your objectives?; Who has power with respect to these so that association with, and support from, them, could increase your legitimacy and 'connection power'?; What sort of power relationship is that? - formal authority ... or some kind of informal role legitimacy, or assessed stature?; Is there anyone who could (and would wish to) suborn the support of these others?; and so on. These questions could in turn lead to the sorting out of powerful others in relevant categories.

More generally, and certainly for initial discussion less directly, many of Robert and Janet's ideas could be categorized in terms of the sources and bases of a person's power: position in a formal organizational power hierarchy, "official post power", and with it the right to mandatory obedience through the control of rewards, and/or punitive sanctions; position in certain informal communications and influence networks giving control of information; "respect power" from occupancy of certain social roles or strength of personality and attributed wisdom, giving 'legitimate rights to be heard and given weight'; a dominant personality combined with the weak personality of "pawns" giving something like Lukes' third dimension of power.

That for any particular situation and for any particular person ideas about the bases and sources of a significant other's power over himself and/or others may not fit into neatly distinguishable categories, does not mean that a

question such as "You say he is powerful; can you tell what you see as the basis or bases of his power?" cannot be the start of learning. Indeed to hold a theoretical perspective which sees that in any particular power relationships there may be a number of basis of power (by either or both participants which may overlap, or augment each other, and which may include perceived connection power (relationships with others in a network) is to be able to incorporate these ideas into the dialogue and the categorization of the others.

In a negotiative, rather than empathetic, paradigm for consultancy (see Eden and Sims, 1979) there is also no reason why the consultant cannot, at some stage, encourage his clients to consider, if they have not already done so, sources and bases of power to do with attributed legitimacy, competence, position in some informal communications and influence network and so on - i.e. the specific ideas of this chapter.

Many of the bases of power can be categorized in terms of the power to dispose rewards and sanctions of one kind or another, and another 'question' for a dialogue about powerful others and power relationships is: "What do you believe are the rewards or sanctions that (x) ... sees ... (y) as mediating for him, and vice-versa, if any?" Talk of perceived rewards and sanctions (which could quite naturally lead to a discussion about whether a person might be prepared to use them in any particular situation, why or why not) also leads to another dimension for considering power relationships.

Robert and Janet distinguished between the power that would result in behavioural compliance, regardless of whether the complier agreed with the demand ("official post power"), and power that involved 'attitudinal' as well as behavioural compliance. Attitudinal compliance was itself categorized in two ways. Firstly, that coming from "respect power" was seen by Robert and Janet as one in which the 'power subject' did not suspend his critical faculties and awareness of choices, but "listened" because of a complex mix of persuasion and willingness to be persuaded because of the superior competence or role legitimacy of the other. The manipulative power of a dominant personality, however, was one in which, as in Lukes' (1974) "third dimension" of power, alternatives to a 'demand' were unlikely to be constructed, (and talk of perceived sanctions may not be appropriate).

These dimensions for considering the nature of power relationships are what Wrong (1979) has called the "forms" of power. These are to be distinguished from the sources and bases of power (although clearly closely linked to them) because, unlike the latter which concentrate on the resources by which the power holder exercises power, they consider particularly the state of mind of the 'power subject', his reasons and motives for complying. This subjectivity is a crucial (and, as I will elaborate in the next chapter the most complex) aspect of enquiry about the nature of particular power relationships. It is this dimension which was incorporated in the question "What do you

believe are the rewards or sanctions which (x) sees ... (y) as mediating for him?" It is an essential aspect of an examination of the bases, sources and forms of the power relationships being examined.

When a person is ordered to comply with a demand, and he does so without personal acceptance of the values and beliefs it reflects, his continued commitment may be less reliable than when he also 'believes in' what he is asked to do (as those managers know whose subordinates are adept at finding ways of not carrying out disliked orders as efficiently or as quickly as their managers would like). Thus consideration of the forms of power is significantly related to consideration of the predictability of the outcomes of power exercise. Much of Robert and Janet's thinking about powerful others was concerned with predicting possible outcomes of power relationships in terms of the attitudes and actions of others, "Who can influence others on our behalf?"; "Associating with whom is likely to increase the likelihood of our being listened to?"; "Can this person succeed in turning others against us?", and so on.

We can expect this to be a typical feature of attempts by policy-makers to consider the politics of their complex problems. "Official post power" and the manipulative power of a dominant personality over "pawns" were seen by Robert and Janet as most predictable in their probabilistic concept of power in terms of likely outcomes, while "respect power", which still left a person with choices, less so.



The dimension of predictability can also be related to exploration of beliefs about the 'magnitude' and 'scope' of significant others' power. Robert and Janet distinguished between the "power to make" and the "power to make and break", where those with the former could help them achieve their ends, but not significantly damage them, whereas the latter was regarded as having both considerable facilitating and damage capability. Although "respect power" was less certain, it was for them the most generalizable, in terms of its likely impact on a wide range of people, in a way that "official post power", 'gatekeeper' and 'manipulative - pawn' relationships were not, being specific to particular structures, positions in specific networks, or particular personalities.

Another way of expressing these aspects of power relationships is in terms of de Jouvenal's (1958) ideas about the 'extensiveness', 'comprehensiveness', and 'intensity' of power, that power has:

"three dimensions; it is extensive if the complying Bs are many; it is comprehensive if the variety of actions to which A can move the Bs is considerable; finally it is intensive if the bidding of A can be pushed far without loss of compliance." (p. 160).

The above are merely some of the ways that I believe a consultant might begin to explore the beliefs of his clients, or a policy maker begin to explore his own beliefs, about powerful others and their relationships in a complex problem; in ways that offer some structure for addressing complexity.

I do not suggest that they could not have been relatively easily constructed without reference to this research. I

do assert, however, that for myself at least, the immersion in the data of this case led me to think about how to approach enquiry and analysis about the topic of a person's powerful others in ways I had not done before, despite a considerable commitment to the importance of power and politics. Many of the above dimensions relate to significant debates in existing literature, such as, for example, whether power is the appropriate concept to use when there is a consensus of values between those involved, whether power can be exercised unintentionally, and so on. Fascinating as these debates may be, taking a view of attributions of power as intersubjective constructions of reality suggests that it is not helpful for learning about how others think about power to firmly hold on to one or other positions in such debates. Rather that it is more helpful to consider dimensions such as those above as a sensitizing and flexible framework for directing learning, enquiry, and analysis.

#### (v) Significance

Why bother with detailed analyses of this kind? Would such an effort be worthwhile? In answering this question I shall give a specific example from another consultancy project in which I was involved, with a journal team concerned to find ways of reviving the fortunes of their journal which had been steadily declining in circulation and profitability for several years (Eden and Jones, 1980). The journal was owned by a division of a large conglomerate publishing house, and the managing director of the division agreed to let us work with the journal team as our sole clients, without interference or instruction from himself

or his senior managers.

After about six months of careful, intensive work by the team, with us, a portfolio of strategies had been evolved and the team was ready to present them to the managing director and other managers in the division. The team spent some time thinking about and rehearsing their presentation in ways which were likely to be seen as sophisticated and professional. What we did not do, however, nor they, was consider very carefully the nature of the relationships between the various individuals to whom the presentation was to be made. Our concern was focussed on what was likely to be acceptable (and impressive) to the managing director as our key actor.

The presentation meeting almost failed. It almost failed because one of the group of senior managers, the finance director, began to question and delegitimize some of the numerical analyses being presented, in ways that the journal team found unhelpful and unnerving, with a consequent loss of momentum in their arguments. The managing director who had been initially highly receptive and sympathetic clearly regarded the finance director as a man of competence and wisdom in his area of specialism and was impressed by his criticisms. As the managing director then began to express doubts, another of the senior managers whom we already knew was likely to take whatever position the managing director took, also added his (loud) voice to the rising body of doubt and criticism.

We had originally negotiated with the team and the managing director a role of minimal participation in the discussion, acting as a resource to the journal team by providing various computer analyses at their request at appropriate moments. In the event the presentation did not fail because we intervened and were able to match expertise with expertise, using output from the dynamic simulation model we had constructed with the team to answer and counter the unanticipated criticism of the finance director. The meeting ended with full agreement to the portfolio of strategies proposed by the team, who, with their confidence restored by our intervention, were able to continue with verve and style and conviction.

With the knowledge of hindsight, of course, I believe now that if we had spent time with the team, collecting and exploring explicitly our shared knowledge about that network of senior managers and the nature of the power relationships between them we would have been better able to help the team simulate and prepare for the meeting in ways that may have avoided the need for our 'emergency' intervention (which could, of course, in view of the momentum of criticism that had built up, have failed disastrously.) If we had spent more time thinking about the managing director's powerful others, including his own 'boss', we may, just may, have been able to anticipate and consider ways of handling the later interventions by his superior which led to the reneging on agreements with the team, the collapse of inter-linked strategies, and the eventual folding of the journal

- to the considerable pain and bitterness of the journal team.

Although what we read about in journals and books are usually, and not surprisingly, the successes rather than the failures, I do not believe that it is an uncommon experience for a great deal of effort and energy to eventually come to nothing because of unforeseen interventions by powerful actors and groups for whom the proposed change is unacceptable. It would be naive to suggest that all such interventions could be anticipated, or indeed that even if they are anticipated, sufficient countervailing power could be mobilised to handle them. Some of the structural aspects of power, with which, of course, Robert and Janet were also confronted, have an overwhelming and immovable 'facticity'.

I do believe, however, that if we could see the topic of powerful others and power relationships not merely as something which we, who are 'sophisticated political actors' in organizations know about and naturally take into account, but one that sometimes requires, and is worth, work and energy to explore carefully, explicitly, in detail, then some of the things which 'go wrong' would go wrong slightly less often. As Bailey (1969) asserts:

"Knowledge is power. The man who correctly understands how a particular structure works can prevent it working or make it work differently with much less effort than a man who does not know these things. This may seem obvious yet actions are often taken without previous analysis and out of ignorance". (p. 108).

It seems almost gratuitous to make the point that what we see in this case is the crucial significance in the formulation of a complex policy problem of those who are seen to have the power to potentially help or hinder the attainment of objectives. Issues of power and politics were central to Robert and Janets thinking and acting about their significant significant others in a world which thus does not seem so very different from that of more traditional organizations. The point is less gratuitous, however, when we recall how infrequently such issues are taken account of in the prevailing body of prescriptions and techniques for problem solving and policy analysis. In the second chapter on this central explanatory category in this case I shall consider another aspect of its complexity which underlines the potential relevance of tools to assist explicit analysis—the possibility of important limits to shared meaning and significance among individuals who answer the kinds of questions discussed earlier.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF POWER (ii): INDIVIDUAL CONSTRUCTIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

When Bacharach and Lawler(1980) assert that "...there appears to be little consensus about the meaning of power or its application to concrete social circumstances", (p.10), they are dryly summarizing the situation surrounding a concept which is not only one of the most written about, but also one of the most debated, in the social sciences. They also point out how in these debates, "Interpretative differences are frequently dismissed as misrepresentations of the empirical reality rather than being viewed as consequences of different constructs or approaches to power." (p.11)

In this thesis I shall also adopt the view that a significant factor underlying the disputes about power is that they are frequently a reflection of fundamental differences in 'conceptual spectacles' for seeing 'what is', and what is relevant and important in what is. The implications of different theoretical spectacles are cogently illustrated by Allison(1971) in his discussion of three models which might be used to explain American policies during the Cuban Missile crisis:

"... while at one level three models produce different explanations of the same happening, at a second level the models produce different explanations of quite different occurrences ... Spectacles magnify one set of factors rather than another and thus not only lead analysts to produce different explanations of problems that appear, in their summary questions, to be the same, but also influence the character of the analyst's puzzle, the evidence he assumes to be relevant, the concepts he uses in examining the evidence, and what he takes to be an explanation ... each analyst attempts to emphasize what is relevant and important, and different conceptual lenses lead analysts to different judgements about what is relevant and important. (p.251)

It is, of course, not only social and political scientists and those who consciously adhere to some particular political ideology who construct different theories, concepts, models about power and power relationships, out of their particular experiences, beliefs and values about their worlds. These differences, particularly among individuals who come from similar backgrounds and organizational contexts, may not always be as clear cut and obvious as those between, say, Marxists and pluralists, and there may be considerable overlaps of perspective. They may, nevertheless, be of considerable significance for differences in who is defined as powerful, and why, by individuals facing complex problems and thus for how those individuals go about managing the politics of those problems.

In this chapter I shall elaborate further on the aspects of particularity in Robert and Janet's constructions of powerful others touched on in the last chapter. I shall show how significant in these constructions, including their feelings of dependency, were their subjective assessments of themselves; the importance of personal feelings of liking and disliking; of their particular experiences with particular individuals and generalizations from that experience; and their evaluations of the 'legitimacy' and illegitimacy of others' power. Finally, I shall discuss what seem to be the implications for the practice of problem-solving and policy analysis of potentially significant individuality in beliefs and values about power and powerful others.



SELF-COGNITIONS IN BELIEFS ABOUT POWER

In the last chapter I described how Robert and Janet believed themselves to be people unlikely to be "listened to" and given weight. This feeling of powerlessness was based partly in their social roles - a black, part-time youth leader and an unemployed school teacher -; and partly (and of course relatedly) because of a considerable lack of personal self-confidence, including in their own ability to think about, plan and effectively manage their complex issue. For Janet it was her youth and inexperience that was important to her lack of self-confidence, for Robert his sense of inferiority at having no proper qualifications.

These conceptions of themselves as people unlikely to be listened to were confirmed and developed in their experiences of tramping from one interview to another to try and raise funds from people, many of whom just "did not listen, did not see the problem". (Robert). They were developed and confirmed in their own experiences of finding that when they did want to carry more weight in their voluntary group, they were not listened to. Rather they were confronted by individuals like the chairman and the other members of the "private sector" who rather than listening, "lecture us" (Robert) or "do not take us seriously" (Janet). Their lack of self-confidence was so strong that even when they found, helped by us, that they could think, plan and act effectively and gain support in a network of influential others, they had great difficulty in believing us when we suggested that they were no longer powerless.

These conceptions of themselves with the central idea of being "listened to" or not, pervaded their meanings and constructions of power. They sought help from those who would give them 'connection power' in ways that are summed up by Janet's statement that "with them behind us, people will listen to us more". The core meaning of their concept of "respect power" was that a person who had such power was listened to and given weight in decision-making. "Oh yes, he has respect power. People always listen to him" (Janet); "He has respect. People look up to him, they listen to the things he says" (Robert). One form of respect power for them came from a person's attributed superior competence, knowledge and wisdom about the world - the qualities they felt they lacked: "I respect the man. He can always make sense out of my nonsense" (Robert); "He always knows the right thing to do" (Janet).

It was their feeling of powerlessness and lack of self-confidence which led Robert and Janet to pay such attention to and to be so fearful of the possibilities of others suborning support for them. It was these beliefs about themselves which were central to their feeling trapped in relationships with those whom they disliked or doubted but on whom they felt dependent for their contacts, or expertise; as with the chairman who "knows everybody and everything".

It is not difficult to recognize and understand why they felt, occupying the social roles that they did, that they were unlikely to carry much social weight, and why, with so

little experience of attempting to influence events, they felt uncertain about their own abilities to plan and put into effect their plans. That we do not find their conceptions of themselves puzzling, (nor indeed that self-cognitions are likely to have a crucial impact on our assessments of others' power with respect to us), does not, nevertheless, undermine the significance of these subjectivities in their constructions of power. For others who have different experiences and cognitions about themselves and their abilities **will** construct the meaning and significance of power, power relationships and their powerful others **in different ways.**

More generally, the very notion of dependency involves significant subjectivities, depending on the value placed on the services, or resources, another can mediate for us, including our definition of those as desirable services or rewards. As Bachrach and Baratz (1970) say of conflicts of values in power, "the successful exercise of power is dependent on the relative importance of conflicting values in the mind of the recipient in the power relationship" (p. 19). Specifically with respect to power-dependency relationships, Bacharach and Lawler (1980) point out that:

"Dependence is based on (1) the availability of alternative outcome sources (outcome alternatives), and (2) the degree of value attributed to the outcome at stake (outcome value) ... (an) ... advantage of power-dependence theory is that its "objective" features have subjective relevance for actors in conflict settings ... This is critical because the cognitive aspect of power relationships becomes important in any concrete setting." (pp. 20 - 22, my emphasis).

I do not wish, in making this point, to forget that talk of subjectivities (and the reality of definitions to those who construct them) to people who are faced with the overwhelming 'objectivity' of their need for particular material resources, and the power of those who control them, is unlikely to be well received. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out:

"An institutional world, then, is experienced as an objective reality ... The institutions, as historical and objective facticities, are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not. He cannot wish them away. He must resist these attempts to change or evade them. They have coercive power over him, both in themselves, by the sheer force of their facticity, and through the control mechanisms that are usually attached to the most important of them." (pp. 77-78).

Acknowledging this aspect of power relationships, that some of them have an objectivity about which most of us would agree, does not, however, mean that it is not also of fundamental theoretical and practical importance to recognize the potential considerable diversity and idiosyncrasy of subjective definitions in particular power relationships between particular people.

#### CONSTRUING LEGITIMACY

Similar points can be made about Robert and Janets' beliefs that certain social roles conferred upon their occupants "respect power", involving 'legitimate rights to be heard and given weight in decision making.' They believed that the probability of success in their venture was crucially linked to association with occupiers of such roles. As an

idea it goes straight to the heart of structural aspects of power. But what exactly those roles might be in any particular social environment or in any particular individual's construction of his problem-reality is not entirely obvious and predictable.

Thus, for example, for both Robert and Janet the archetypal respect power role was that of a minister of the church: "People respect them (ministers of the church), I think they have such a force." (Robert); "I agree. I think people do have respect for ministers" (Janet). Both were regular church-goers and were themselves 'brought up to' regard church ministers with respect, and in fact it was Janet's minister who had encouraged her to join the voluntary action group.

When Robert had first become concerned about seeing so many unemployed youngsters hanging about the streets, it was church ministers whom he had first contacted on the basis that they would not only be sympathetic, but also have the power to help him do something about the situation. One minister did respond and Robert was fond of recounting the story of how this minister, within a few days of a promise of help, had arranged a meeting with representatives of the Youth Service which led in turn to the setting up of a day-centre for unemployed kids under the Youth Service aegis.

A second, significant experience for Robert with respect to this minister was his belief that it was the other's

intervention which led to his appointment as the day-centre leader. He had originally written to the Youth Service, requesting the job, and had been turned down. He once again contacted the minister and a few weeks later received a second letter offering him the job.

Both Robert and Janet had further experiences of this particular minister's capacity to influence others, as he introduced them to new contacts. And indeed, as someone whose role respect power was augmented, for them, by his attributed wisdom, competence and wide network of contacts, he was seen by them to have "the power to make or break". However, he was not the only minister who gave them help and provided important and useful introductions. Thus it is not surprising that Robert and Janet attributed "respect power" to ministers of the church. Yet I suspect that there are people who would find the idea that church ministers carry much, if any, political weight surprising. Robert and Janets' construction of this role's power derived from their background particular experiences. As Coulson (1972) points out, there are at least two crucial difficulties with the generally oversocialized concept of role and role expectations- that it does not adequately account for individual differences in role enactment, and, secondly, for lack of consensus in the expectations people have about the behaviour of occupants of particular social roles. (see also Dahrendorf, 1968)

Again, more generally, the notion of legitimacy, that was an inherent part of their beliefs about role-derived rights of decision-making, has been seen as crucial in policy-making processes by a number of writers. (Edelman,

1964, Burns, 1966, Bailey, 1969, Hall, 1972, Pettigrew, 1977)

When we examine the concept of legitimacy, it clearly involves meaning giving. Pettigrew (1977) makes the point as follows:

"Politics concerns the creation of legitimacy for certain ideas, values, and demands ... The management of meaning refers to a process of symbol construction and value use designed both to create legitimacy for one's own demands and to "delegitimize" the demands of opponents in a political decision-making process. Therefore, a fundamental factor in the life history of a demand in a strategy-formulation process will be the answer to the question 'What does that demand symbolize, what does it mean to the various interested parties in the process?" (p. 85)

Pettigrew describes legitimacy as a "highly diffuse and movable resource" and when we pay attention to the meaning - giving processes that are fundamental to it, it seems important to pay attention to the way in which constructions of what is 'right and proper' cannot be assumed to be consensually shared within any culture and society. The point is made by Michener and Burt (1974) as follows:

"Legitimacy differs from other bases of influence because it resides entirely in the beliefs and attitudes of group members. If shifts occur in these attitudes, the prerogatives enjoyed by a person will undergo change. ... legitimacy is group-specific." (p. 310)

Thus, although issues of legitimation, including not only legitimating rhetoric - "the management of meaning" - but the legitimacy ascribed to particular roles and people, seem recognizably likely to be of crucial importance in policy feasibility; what is deemed to be legitimate in any particular organization or group is not necessarily self-evident. It is a feature of the politics of policy-making that seems worth attending to with some care; particularly

when the cloak of vagueness and ambivalence of much legitimating rhetoric which contributes to its success is pulled away by those who see the proposals it surrounds as having particularly significant ramifications for themselves. Then the issue of "what does the demand symbolize, what does it mean to the various interested parties" becomes both important and by no means self-evident, or non-problematic.

#### ATTRIBUTIONS OF POWER- A FRAMEWORK OF BELIEFS AND VALUES

Jones et al (1971) argue that:

"Attribution theory begins with man's motivation to understand the cause and effect relations that underlie and give stable meaning to the shifting surface of events. It assumes a need to have a veridical understanding of these relations (a reality orientation to the world) and a need to predict and apply them (a control orientation)." (p. xi)

Perhaps the best known model in attribution is Kelley's (1971, 1973) Analysis of Variance Model, whereby "An effect is attributed to the one of its possible causes with which, over time, it co-varies." (1971, p.3) Kelley suggests that a person's action will be explained as a consequence of the presence of a particular stimulus, rather than the person's inner dispositions, if the person's response is (1) a consensual response shared by a number of people with that stimulus, (2) distinctively associated with the stimulus, and (3) consistent over time when interacting with the stimulus. These ideas have some similarity with Schopler and Layton's (1974) proposition about attributing an exercise of power, that ... "given B's state at time 1, person A is seen to have influence over person B if A



directs a behavior to B who subsequently does something at time 2 which does not follow from his state at time 1 but which does follow from A's behavior ". (p. 35).

Certainly Robert and Janet observed, for example, various ministers of the church distinctively (particularly in comparison with themselves) effect interventions, do so with a variety of individuals, and with apparently consistent success. Yet, as I showed in the last chapter, Robert and Janet's attributions were not based on some neutral pre-suppositionless gathering of data, but were dependent on the framework of expectations, theories, values which they brought to making sense of their 'observations'. In particular, they were strongly related to personal feelings of liking and disliking (which in turn, as I shall explore more fully in the next chapter were related to the degree of support or rejection others gave to their 'prized images of self' . Thus, Heider (1958) argues that: ".if we like a person we are more apt to interpret his act as a benefit; conversely, if we dislike a person we are more likely to interpret his act as a harm." (p. 258). Specifically in relation to attributions of power, this idea is taken account of by Schopler and Layton(*op.cit*) when they give the following example of an attribution of social influence:

"For example, the attributed influence of a dissertation chairman in the production of a brilliant dissertation is likely to be enhanced by the observer who likes the chairman and dislikes the student. Conversely, if the dissertation is a catastrophe, the liked professor's attributed influence would probably drop." (p. 55)

Thus, for example, as I described in the last chapter, when

Robert and Janet approved of an exercise of power by somebody they liked, it could be labelled a manifestation of legitimate "respect power", with the strong personality of the exerciser of such power, and his superior competence and wisdom, earning the respect of others. When they disliked and distrusted the power holder, his power was categorized in terms of the unprincipled defining and redefining of information, or because of the manipulative dominance of a strong personality over others who were "pawns", "easily-led", "without minds of their own", who were also to be condemned for their weakness.

Thus, for example, Robert and Janet believed that one of the reasons why a member of the "private sector" had "changed towards us" was because of his inappropriate succumbing to the manipulative power of the chairman.

"He has changed. Whereas before I would have said he was my friend, now I am suspicious of him. I think he is being very much led by T.. "

"Yes, he has changed. It must be because of T..., it must be the only reason. They spend much more time together than they used to. I think he is easily led."

(Janet)

They were also frequently negatively evaluative about the possession of "official-post power", as reflected in the prejorative comment of Janet on one person that "he only has "official post power - he isn't respected". When official post power was used on their behalf, then they usually

suggested that the person also had "respect power".

We can make sense of this negative evaluation in terms of their own experiences of this form of power. Robert frequently felt anxious about the possibility that he might be sacked by his 'bosses'. He resented, but felt unable to openly object to, the frequent presence of his immediate superior at the day centre - "spying on me, always being critical". For both of them the experience of being involved in negotiations with M.S.C. and the Youth Service for a grant was not a happy one. They felt that the people who had the real "official post power" to decide on the grant were treating them with contempt by refusing to meet them personally.

"Why do they send these people to meet us? They are just pawns. Why does Mr. W.. not want to talk to us himself? He wants control but he refuses to see us."

(Robert)

They also believed that the representatives involved in the negotiations had no real interest in helping the unemployed kids. "They don't care about the kids. They are only involved because they have been told to ." (Janet).

These evaluations and categorizations of others were of enormous importance for the kinds of actions they wanted to take with respect to the others, and for the amount of cognitive energy (and anxiety) they devoted particularly to attempting to anticipate and pre-empt those who "can nullify what we are doing". They represent evaluative and interpersonal

complexities in Robert and Janet's thinking about powerful others which do not seem to be particularly strange or atypical although the particular form they take for others in other contexts may be very different. They are complexities that the consultant, for example, who wishes to understand his clients' thinking about powerful others may be well advised to be aware of if he is to make sense of his clients' categorizations of 'positive' and 'negative' powerful others.

#### WHAT YOU SEE DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU STAND

In the following section I wish to argue on the basis of this case that constructions of power may depend on 'where you stand', not only in terms of particular experiences and frameworks of beliefs and values which may differ from those of others, but also because there may be some important differences of perspective depending on whether a person is considering power relationships and powerful others as an observer of two other parties, or as the 'subject' or exerciser of power himself. It is an aspect of the topic of power that is virtually ignored in the power literature. For most of those who write about power, even when conceding that it is an "ineradicably value-dependent" concept, write from the standpoint of being 'objective' observers of exercises of power, in situations which they are not themselves directly involved in. Yet I believe not only that it may be a crucial factor in accounting for some of the central debates about the nature of power in the literature, but also that it is of considerable practical significance for the person attempting to think about and manage his relationships with powerful significant others.

To take first the controversy over whether power relationships must involve a conflict of values, latent or overt, between the two or more parties in the relationship. One of the reasons why Lukes (1974) called his view of power radical, was because it offered, in direct contrast to most conceptions of power, a view that power could be exercised even when the power subject was completely unaware of possible alternatives. Lukes himself agreed that this idea presented major empirical difficulties of discovering what a person's 'real' as opposed to 'subjective' interests are, and it is this empirical question which leads Bachrach and Baratz (1970) for example, to insist that an exercise of power must involve a conflict of values, even if the conflict is latent or suppressed.

Yet as suggested in the last chapter, taking the standpoint of observers of power relationships between others, the value-laden nature of constructions of power means that often we do attribute a power basis to relationships which the power 'subject' (and indeed also the power exerciser) would not see as involving power. It does not seem helpful, therefore, to exclude this aspect of the meaning and significance of power by definitional 'fiat'. Rather, that it is important to be explicit about the place from which the power relationship is being viewed.

Robert and Janet were unable to conceive of manipulative or 'third dimension' power being exercised over themselves,

although they were able to attribute this form of power as observers of power relationships. Our own relationship with Robert and Janet is one illustration of this. Both Robert and Janet came to feel very dependent on our help as their "secret advisers". As "secret advisers" we were members of that category of actors, which I shall explore in more detail in the next chapter, whom they defined as "100% with us". They trusted us and indeed came to see us as having a considerable level of competence and wisdom with which to help them. In this situation we had, in fact, many opportunities to influence their definition of the world, indeed to manipulate them. Yet I do not believe that this possibility occurred to them, or that they regarded us as having power over them, despite the dependency relationship which Robert in particular freely acknowledged. For they felt that, as individuals who quite clearly had "minds of our own", they were not being stripped of alternative constructions; and they had no resentment of their dependency. From this standpoint, when we recognize perceptions and situational definitions, rather than the observer's rules of relevance, Schopler and Laytons' (1974) suggestion is apt, that "In circumstances of pure cooperation, when A's and B's outcomes are in perfect correspondence, actual power considerations are irrelevant." (p. 37)

The factor of trust, here, was of considerable importance, in terms of the definition of significant relevance and irrelevance by Robert and Janet. Luhmann (1979) suggests that trust is a way of reducing the complexity of our world,

thus making it a more manageable place and at the same time opening up a greater set of possibilities for action.

"It strengthens the capacity of the present for understanding and reducing complexity; it strengthens states as opposed to events and thus makes it possible to live and to act with greater complexity in relation to events... trust increases the 'tolerance of uncertainty' ... Future possibilities in fact do not contract but rather expand with planning projections, which incorporate long and complicated chains of cause and effect involving many parameters and the several actions of different people ... " (p. 15)

Thus, when Robert and Janet did acknowledge the power of others whom they trusted, those who were "100% with us" and had, for example, "respect power", it was not something they felt they had to think about with respect to themselves (as opposed to with respect to third parties). Trust meant that they could, rather, devote most of their cognitive energy and anxiety on those whom they saw as having the power and the inclination to "nullify what we are doing".

Another distinction between Robert and Janets' different standpoints is that both as observers of power relationships and considering the possibility of their own power, they saw power in terms of the achievement of intended effects. This is not surprising in view of their interest in whether or not others or themselves had sufficient power to get what they wanted. When considering, however, the power others had over them, the 'rule of anticipated reactions' (Friedrich, 1937) operated additionally. They acted in the light of their assessments of the others' 'power to make or break', in ways that those others were simply not aware of.

This once again is pertinent to a major controversy in the power literature. The 'rule of anticipated reactions' is often cited to indicate that there are flaws in the notion that power is the achievement of intended effects (see e.g. Passigli, 1973). Lukes' third dimension of power includes the possibility that a person or group can exercise power unconsciously, and Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that: "... to the extent that a person or group - consciously or unconsciously - creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power" (p. 7).

On the other hand, others argue that power cannot be exercised unintentionally. For example Ball (1976) proposes that, "... since one cannot 'exercise' anything (for example, judgement) unintentionally, this means that we cannot intelligibly maintain that an agent exercised his power unintentionally (although he may not, to be sure, intend all the outcomes.)" (p. 211). Wrong (1979), while agreeing that the "consciousness of the power subject" is of crucial significance in power relationships, nevertheless argues as follows that:

"... if an actor is believed to be powerful, if he knows that others hold such a belief, and if he encourages and resolves to make use of it by intervening in or punishing actions by others who do not comply with his wishes, then he truly has power and his power has indeed been conferred upon him by the attributions, perhaps initially without foundation, of others. But if he is unaware that others believe him powerful, or if he does not take their belief seriously in planning his own projects, then he has no power and the belief that he has is mistaken, a misperception of reality. We should not say that the residents of a street had power over a man with paranoid delusions who



refused to leave his house because he feared attack by his neighbours." (p. 9)

However, Wrong's arguments, persuasive as they are, are the arguments of somebody observing an exercise of power and making judgements from that standpoint about what 'really' constitutes an exercise of power, regardless of the subjectivities of power constructions. From the point of view of the paranoid man in his example, his neighbours did exercise power, and this importantly led him to act in particular ways.

When we turn to Robert and Janet's conception of their own power, the particular feature of this standpoint was the considerable difficulty they had in conceiving themselves as having any power. I have shown how, particularly at the beginning of the project, both Robert and Janet felt extremely powerless. Gradually, however, they began to build up an increasing network of influential contacts, and they began to feel that others were "taking notice of us" because of these contacts, in ways they had not done before. Thus they suggested of two members of their voluntary group's "private sector" that:

"I think he has started to take notice of us because he thinks we are going places." (Robert)

"I think he is getting worried because we are getting these contacts." (Janet)

Yet when we encouraged them to consider that they were beginning to develop a power base of their own in their

community, they were obviously uncomfortable with this as an idea. Why should this be? One answer may lie in the perceived illegitimacy of the concept of exercising power. I discussed in Chapter One how it is often regarded as inappropriate openly to discuss internal politics and personal interests in obtaining or retaining power, except with close colleagues and friends. McClelland (1970) has shown how businessmen prefer to label their political interests and ambitions as "achievement motives" rather than an interest in obtaining power. Despite Robert and Janets' readiness to talk of the power of others, and despite their wish to increase their own stature and legitimation, and their acknowledgement that this had occurred, there was some sense in which it seemed was not quite legitimate to them to talk of themselves as having any power even if localised and specific to a small number of relationships.

Secondly, the idea that they might have acquired some power contradicted extremely strong conceptions of self. During the course of this project their self-confidence increased considerably. However their uncertainty about themselves, in a complexly ambivalent set of values which meant that they desperately wanted to be seen as **capable and competent to tackle their issue but nevertheless doubted these qualities in themselves**, meant that the idea that they might, for example, themselves have "respect power" would have not been credible to them.

Thirdly, what was most salient to them in terms of anxiety

and cognitive energy was others' potential power to hinder their efforts. They were acutely conscious of what they saw as their vulnerability. Bacharach and Lawler (1976) suggest that in conflict situations the higher the perceived "damage capability" of another and the lower one's own perceived "retaliatory" or "blockage" capability, the higher the power attributed to the other and lower the power attributed to oneself. Robert and Janets' focus of attention was on some powerful others' capacity for damage, and when they did, on our encouragement, think about their own perceived 'damage capability', in the eyes of others, it did not seem to them to be high.

The idea that power is a complex, multi-faceted concept in these ways differing in its meaning or significance depending upon the standpoint from which it is viewed, is of considerable practical significance. For it further underlines the importance, which I shall pick up again in this thesis, for the consideration and management of relations with any problem-significant powerful others of the process that symbolic interactionists have called "role-taking": when a person is "imaginatively constructing the attitudes of the other so as to anticipate the behaviour of the other." (Lauer and Handel, 1977, p. 62).

### IDIOSYNCRACY AND LEARNING

In this chapter I have been exploring the complex subjectivities, idiosyncracies, evaluations, that may be involved in thinking about powerful problem-significant others .

Robert and Janet shared many of their ideas about power. This is not surprising since these ideas were mainly constructed and developed together. They spent most of every day with one another talking about their experiences and their significant others, and also exploring and explicitly reflecting on their own thinking and experiences together in their meetings with us. However there were differences between them.

Robert, who had a greater sense of uncertainty about his abilities to think and plan effectively than Janet, saw respect power in terms bordering on awe, a feeling of deference which Janet did not share to the same extent. We encouraged both of them to think in more instrumental terms about the others, to not allow their feelings of dislike and distrust to result in impulsive responses that could have significantly detrimental long-term consequences. Janet seemed much more willing and able to be careful and thinking with respect to significant others than Robert who seemed to be significantly less successful in his attempts at role-taking and instrumentality. As I shall explore more fully in the next chapter, Robert had a consistent tendency to speedily assume that others whom he construed as rejecting him as a competent and worthwhile individual were deliberately setting out to sabotage their efforts.

It was Janet who conceived of the idea of a person having the "power to make or break" and she worked hard, along with us, to persuade Robert that it would be important not to

antagonise those who have such power, but rather attempt to use it to their own advantage. At the same time, however, Robert's conceptions of the way others could use power to "nullify what we are doing" introduced Janet to ideas about processes of manipulation, possibilities for redefining information coming from positions in particular communications links, the way in which individuals in groups often have different values and objectives and are interested in imposing their definitions of reality on others, which she, initially more trusting, might not otherwise have considered. It was she who constructed the notion of "the power to make or break", but her learning which led to this construction was contributed to significantly by Robert. Thus it was that the two members of this particular team, as almost certainly in other teams, were able to offer important awareness and learning to one another about relevant powerful others. I have used the term 'learning', and Robert and Janet's constructions of power and powerful others developed over time as they acted, and reflected with us on the outcomes of those actions. Thus, for example they were initially concerned with the question, "Who has the power to help us help the unemployed kids?" However the process of attempting to influence events, and thus others, led them very quickly to become embroiled in the internal politics of their group. This then led to an elaboration of their notions of power to include a strong concern with the ways others might be able to thwart them. The process of discovering resistance to their influence attempts within the group, and the new awareness of their

own dependence upon certain key members, led them, with our encouragement, to more actively seek a network of relationships outside the group. This, in turn, led to a change in their constructions of who was most relevantly powerful with respect to them. Thus, for example, their feelings of dependence upon the chairman of the group, who "knows everybody and everything" reduced, but now, as I have said, they became aware of the possibility of **another's power "to make or break"**.

It is also important to recognize the effects of our own interventions and activity with Robert and Janet upon the way in which they construed their **powerful others**. The method of consultancy used was one which involved **helping** Robert and Janet, through producing an explicit model of their complex problem construction, exploring and using their own subjective knowledge about their problem-reality. Our intention was to enable them to develop a greater awareness of their own knowledge about their world, to learn to 'know what they know'. We encouraged them to consider more carefully the ramifications of their beliefs about their world and their significant others and to debate and negotiate with each other about them. Inevitably the process of explicit reflection must lead to a different level of awareness than without it.

Furthermore, our own role in the process was not a passive, neutrally empathetic one. We encouraged Robert and Janet to ask questions of their own and others' actions, drawing

attention to those aspects of their beliefs which we saw as significant in ways which inevitably offered them some constructions of power and power relationships, which they might not otherwise have considered. In particular, for example, we led them to consider more carefully than they might otherwise have done not only the importance of developing new networks of influential relationships, but the consequences of taking action with respect to one individual in such networks for their relationships with others. And of course we were importantly implicated in the way in which they became less dependent upon others for problem solving skills and expertise. This was partly because we encouraged them **throughout the project in** the development of their own problem-handling capacities, but also because they came to rely on us as people to whom they could turn for help in managing the particular crises that occurred continually in the day-to-day process of tackling their complex problem.

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In the last chapter I explored Robert and Janet's ways of considering and differentiating between the significant others whom they saw as having the power to facilitate or hinder the attainment of their objectives. I argued, with references to the appropriate literature, that there was much in their thinking about powerful others that is likely to make sense and be recognizable in other organizational worlds; and that these ideas could be the basis for 'asking questions' and structuring the complexity of a dialogue about powerful others in other contexts.

I did, however, point out that there was not always a neat fit between Robert and Janets' constructions of powerful

others and existing categories. In this chapter I have explored this further, using the data from this case with other ideas that the thinking about this data led me to. I have attempted to show how although questions about powerful others and power relationships based on Robert and Janet's recognizable categories may be widely meaningful, the detailed and specific content of answers to these questions may also involve considerable differences in meaning and significance. There are several practical implications which can be drawn from this.

(i) A stance towards data

As Allison (1971) points out, "... different conceptual lenses lead ... to different judgements about what is relevant and important". (p. 251). Thus the consultant or policy-maker who sees policy-making in organizations as a process importantly involving internal politics will inevitably be sensitive to data about internal politics in a way which a person who believes that organizational relationships are essentially harmonious behind some shared organizational goals is not.

Specifically with reference to the content of this chapter, the consultant who sees that his clients' constructions of powerful significant others may involve highly evaluative categorizations of the 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' power of the others, perhaps strongly based on personal feelings of liking and disliking will be interested in, and attuned to hearing any data about this aspect of power attributions with its potentially significant implications for the kinds of actions clients may wish to take with respect to powerful



others. The consultant who believes that power-dependency relationships may rest on subjective cognitions about self and valued resources, will be aware that whether or not he shares these cognitions about his clients and their conceptions of what is needed or valued, they will be real to them with real consequences for their beliefs about another's power with respect to themselves; and are ignored by him potentially to his cost in terms of his own understanding and credibility with his clients as paying attention to their problem-reality.

Holding a theoretical perspective which suggests that the meaning of power and power relationships may be very different depending on the position, as observer or participant, from which they are viewed suggests that it is worthwhile for a consultant to encourage and help his clients with role-taking enquiry about their powerful significant others. For if, for example, a person does not himself regard himself as having power over you and rather feels strongly that the relationship is one of mutual dependency, then this is important learning for the management of the relationship.

Above all, we return to the concept of intersubjectivity as a stance towards data. Deising (1972) suggests that: "Every good case study should be built on a combination of sensitizing and concrete concepts, the one leading the reader into the case and the other making him at home in it...the interaction between concrete and sensitizing concepts is part of the continuous and close interaction between observation and theory in case study methods.." (p.209) And so with the consultant attempting to enter into the particular 'case' of his clients problem-reality.

(ii) Complexity and Listening

I have attempted to show in this chapter that a person's thinking about his powerful others is likely to involve complex frameworks of subjective, idiosyncratic beliefs and values, experience and wisdom about his particular 'problem-reality'. Thus any techniques and approaches which assume that the answer to the question "Who are those with power, and why?" is relatively straightforward are likely to miss crucial complexities. In the client-consultant situation ignoring these may lead the client to act towards his significant others in ways that are considerably perplexing to the consultant.

When the client is a team, the dimension of complexity is likely to be significantly increased as team members have different constructions of power and powerful others - which also, of course, means that they may have important learning and knowledge to offer one another. The complexity that may be involved in considering powerful others comes not only from the subjectivities and values belonging to a client; the diversity which may exist in a team; the development through sensitizing dialogue of a new awareness about the many facets and dimensions of power relationships. It comes additionally from the way in which powerful others themselves intersubjectively construct the particular meaning and significance of their own power (if they see themselves as having any) and others', in the network of power relationships being considered, in which, **the clients themselves** may be 'significant others' for them. The complexity of the attribution process involved in attempting to understand the mutual 'other-definitions' of those in networks of influence

relationships is potentially enormous and unlikely to be manageable without some explicit aid. The need for explicit tools to assert processes of learning about and working with complexity is expressed by Eden, Jones, Sims and Smithin (1981) as follows, in ways which refer specifically to the team situation but are equally relevant to the situation of an individual client or the policy-maker dialoguing with himself:

"If we were seeking some concept which conveniently encapsulates what we are paying attention to in devising ways of assisting teams it would be to find ways of assisting the formal process of listening. By this we mean the listening by a consultant to members of a team; by members of a team to each other; by members of a team to themselves. What is consciously and carefully listened to are the theories, attitudes, worries, values and political concerns that members of the team have about the nature, causes and consequences of the current situation and any picture of some preferred situation that they have. We believe that listening must also involve the provision of a tool that allows members of a team to hold on to the complexity of the different bodies of wisdom and desires of the team and above all allows that complexity to be managed and negotiated through careful and explicit analysis." (p. 40).

I have not attempted to develop techniques in addition to theoretical analysis within the context of this Ph.D. I regard this as a next phase of my own future research. However I can say something about my current ideas about the direction in which such development might go. In the paper from which the above quote was taken, we go on to discuss the use of cognitive mapping as a tool for listening and analysis. This technique, as a way of representing visually the content and structure of persons' beliefs and theories about the nature and relationships between events can offer useful help in explicit modelling of theories about

who is a powerful other, why, and with what consequences.

However, I believe there is a place for the development of techniques which more specifically assist with modelling issues of power and politics in at least two areas. Firstly there is modelling of beliefs about power networks that can (1) represent the nature of those relationships in terms of the 'kind' of power involved, (2) facilitate the simulation and exploring of possible outcomes of exercises of power (for example on behalf of, or against, a policy-maker) by those involved. Secondly and closely relatedly, there is the modelling that attempts to model powerful others for example, their values, concerns, beliefs, (including their constructions of others) in the problem-situation being considered, in ways that capture far more of the complexity that is likely to be involved than the relatively simple strategy - preference approach of 'game-theoretic analysis.

I would expect any modelling of powerful others to 'feed into' any more summary representation of power networks. To assist with this there is a need for further theoretical analysis of the cognition of 'modelling others' and in this body of interlinked findings this is a theme I pick up again in more detail in Chapter Eight.

As a final comment on issues of complexity it would be absurd, of course, to assume that encouraging explicit analysis of powerful others and power relationships does not bring with it its own complexities and difficulties (just as

it would be absurd to suggest that a consultant may not sometimes wish to play his own covert power game within the consultancy situation with respect to his clients) . To openly address such matters in a team may lead to a new awareness of the internal politics of the team in a way that could facilitate 'team destruction' rather than team cohesion, although the subverting of the dominance of the most powerful members of a team may be exactly what the consultant wants.

The nature of political relationships and investments which team members may well have with others outside their team mean that it is highly unlikely that they will be prepared to publicly declare all aspects of their thinking about their powerful others, (and I include here highly personal and therefore potentially highly threatening data about self, hopes, fears, ambitions). The consultant and the other members of a team may have to work at the implicit, rather than explicit, level with a great deal of the clues and indicators they hear.

Not least of the difficulties may be the sense of confusion and paralysis engendered by encouraging an explicit awareness of the complexities of the topic of power.

"Several times over the years, I have been confronted, almost accused, by people whom I have endeavoured to help. They have gained the perspective to be able to talk about their own concerns differently - which means they have expanded their capacity to perceive things from several different positions. This complicates the process of decision-making and they become furiosus at me for robbing them in some way of the limited view of reality which has provided them with a kind of stability.

I became ambivalent because I wonder if learning is worthy of that much anguish." (Morimoto, 1973, p.257)

It seems to me, for example, that one kind of anguish and despair which can come from examining the nature of power may be an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and with it a total loss of the ability or desire to act. People may feel robbed of their belief that they can change events.

The permutations and ramifications of complexities such as these are likely to be so numerous for different situations and different personalities that I could not possibly, even if I wished to, make recommendations about the choices that need to be made about how best to handle them. Their existence, however, does not seem to me to be a good reason for not attempting to develop techniques and approaches which can be used, as and when appropriate, to facilitate explicit analysis of powerful others and their relationships in a complex problem - even if that analysis misses some important data that clients will not reveal even when they trust, even care about, the consultant and/or other members of a team.

The argument for this remains as set out at the end of the last chapter. It includes the belief that not only may explicit analysis increase rather than decrease the possibilities for effective action, but also that there is an important trade-off to be considered between the despair from realizing the impossibility of certain change, and the despair which may accompany the expenditure of enormous effort fruitlessly because its likely fruitlessness was not properly examined until the learning came too late.

## CHAPTER SIX:

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF-IMAGE

#### INTRODUCTION

In the last two chapters I discussed what emerged as a central conceptual category for understanding the construction of the significance of others by Robert and Janet. It was a feature of their thinking about others which most of us who work in organizations would recognise and 'know'- that is, that issues of power and politics are likely to be crucial content in a person's formulation of his complex policy problem, and thus in his thinking about his problem-significant others.

In this chapter I shall explore a second 'core' category for understanding Robert and Janets' construction of the significance of others. It too has content which most of us would know: that is, that issues of self-esteem or self-worth, the reactions and evaluations of others to their 'prized image of self', were of considerable significance in their thinking about and relations with others. It is an idea about a feature of our interpersonal life that is relatively common place in psychological and social psychological theory. The need for social approval is also set out by Maslow (1970) as one of the levels of his "hierarchy of needs" model and thus through his enormous influence on the human relations school of organization theory is 'part and parcel' of the O.D. consultant's repertoire of theories for practice. Just as, however, a perusal of the journals which are the province of the O.D. practitioner and theorist, tends to reveal an emphasis on helping with interpersonal issues and process

rather than with the analysis and handling of the content of complex policy problems; so interpersonal issues have not typically been regarded as a 'business' of those concerned to help individuals handle their complex problems to do with changing some aspect of the 'world out there' such as operational researchers, systems analysts, corporate planners and so on.

In this chapter I wish to explore the notion that when we talk of interpersonal dynamics what we are referring to is often the process by which values about self-image and self-worth become salient or activated in ways that mean, to use Turner's (1968) distinction, that "task -directed" interactions become "identity-directed interactions - primarily directed by each member's concern about how others feel toward him ... validation of a particular self-conception becomes the guiding consideration" (p. 101). Furthermore, I wish to explore, using the data from the case, how such processes may be not simply of relatively short-term significance, part of the 'normal to and fro' of people working together, but rather may be of fundamental importance to the ways in which people define, categorize, and therefore wish to act towards, their problem-significant others, not merely as allies or opponents but potentially much more intensely, as 'friends' and 'enemies'.

In this chapter I shall show how Robert and Janet's values about self-worth and competence were a crucial part of their framework for considering and evaluating others, and how,



when threatened, those values became activated in ways, and with consequences, that went far beyond, and with sometimes detrimental consequences, for the 'rational instrumentalities' of their problem to do with helping unemployed kids; and how they were a crucial aspect of their defining the significance of those whom they described as "100% with us" in contrast to those who "are trying to nullify what we are doing". I shall show that, within the social dynamics of their attempts to tackle their issue, their concerns about self-worth, self and social image defined significant self-orientated problems for them which, however, were not easily separable into some distinct category 'interpersonal' but were complexly interwoven in their politics of attempting to help unemployed kids. It is a long chapter but I hope by appropriate sectioning I have retained the benefit of coherence without too much cost of 'infinite elaboration'.

#### ALLIES AND OPPONENTS

I have suggested that others are defined as significant to a problem situation when they are believed to be able, in various ways, to help or hinder the attainment of the preferred ends salient to the problem. For Robert and Janet one crucial way of differentiating between problem-significant others was in terms of the categories "those who are 100% with us" on the one hand, and those who are "trying to nullify what we are doing" (Robert) or "are trying to get rid of us" or "are working against us" (Janet).

Those who were "100% with us" were those whom Robert and Janet

believed to share the same values as themselves about helping the kids - "he has empathy", "he wants the same things as us", "he really cares about the kids", "he sees the problem", "he's not in for politics or money". They were also, above all, those who saw them as worthwhile competent people with a central role in the prosecution of any shared effort to help the unemployed kids. Such people "want to help us get what we want", "always ask us what we think", "really listens", "makes sense of my nonsense", "likes us". People who were "100% with us" were those whom "we trust", "we can count on". In short, they were people whom they themselves valued and whom they saw as valuing them. Those whom Robert called those "who are trying to nullify what we are doing", and Janet those "who are trying to get rid of us" or "are against us" were the polar opposites of the others. They were people whom Robert and Janet saw as having "no empathy", "not really interested in the kids", "in for recognition", "doing it for himself". They were people who "lectured" rather than "listened", "do not take us seriously", "are dubious about us", "always criticising us". They were thus those whom Robert and Janet saw as rejecting rather than valuing them and indeed as the category label suggest as attempting to undermine their efforts and role in attempting to help the kids.

This categorization of problem-significant others is perfectly understandable within the context and politics of their attempts to help unemployed kids. I mentioned in Chapter Five the role of trust in political relationships.

One aspect of the importance of those who were "100% with us" was that even though they might have considerable power, and thus power potentially to sabotage them, this power need not be a matter of concern. They could enjoy security as trust released them from the need to devote much cognitive energy to thinking about what the others might do against them.

Robert and Janet saw themselves, furthermore, particularly initially, as having little legitimacy, and indeed continued to be uncertain of their own power even when they had established a network of influential contacts. It was not surprising that they felt support and help was only, or most likely, to come from those who had "empathy", who "see the problem", "like us", "listen".

Although Robert and Janet felt isolated and ignored in their original group, they were initially extremely reluctant to separate themselves from it. This was not merely because they did not have initially their own wide network of influential contacts. In arguing that "We can't go off and be a group on our own", (Janet), "We have to link up with people to make a group" (Robert), they were making the point that membership of a formal group was a way of having at least some political credibility. They were recognizing the point made by Bacharach and Lawler (1980) that "The group becomes the viable unit for political action." (p.8) They also quite simply wanted help in the mammoth day-to-day task of attempting to help the unemployed kids raising funds, mobilizing support, indeed physically modifying premises that could become a training workshop. "We want people who can help push things on". (Janet)

However, within these categories of significant others, 'those with whom we can form a credible political unit' ("our group"), who could also be 'those who can help in the day-to-day tasks' ("those who will help us push things on") Robert and Janet wanted a central policy-making role. It is not surprising that they wanted the members of any group to comprise those who accorded them that central role, to be those who are "100% with us". The significance of trusted allies was indeed developed for them through their experiences of being isolated and ignored, and furthermore feeling that many of the original group "are trying to get rid of us" (Janet). After these experiences, when the original group disbanded after a grant application to the M.S.C had been refused and Robert and Janet later came to form a new group, it was very important to them that this new group should consist as far as possible of those who were "100% with us."

Apart from the obvious points that this would make it easier for them to retain a central role in the decision making of the group, an environment of continual conflict and political manoeuvring is quite simply both unpleasant and a drain on energy that could otherwise be spent upon the task in hand, which it must be remembered, was of enormous significance to both Robert and Janet. These features of political relationships are recognized by Lawler and Youngs (1975) and Bacharach and Lawler (1980). Lawler and Youngs criticise the prevailing body of coalition research and theory for providing "uni-factor" rather than "multi-factor" explanations of why people choose one coalition rather than another. They offer an

"integrative" model of coalition formation which takes account of several factors: expected payoff, expected probability of success, and expected attitudinal agreement. From the experiments they conducted, they concluded that all three factors affected the choice of a coalition by a person, but that attitudinal agreement was the most important factor, while expected payoff was the least. They went on to suggest that attitudinal agreement is important because it is a basis for anticipating the amount of conflict likely in a particular coalition, and that:

"Attitudinal similarity may be an end, in itself. Choosing to form a coalition in which one's ally has divergent attitudes and opinions may signify (to oneself or others) a lack of commitment to or conviction regarding one's beliefs." (p.14)

Bacharach and Lawler take up these ideas in their proposal that the two prime factors affecting the formation of coalitions are, firstly expectations about the increased "magnitude of outcomes" expected from forming a coalition with other parties, and, secondly, expectations about likely conflicts of interest. The latter they differentiate as ideology, "the normative framework in which group members work ... the set of political and social beliefs the parties hold in common that provides a prime milieu for sustaining any social network." (p.92); and functional goals, the "pragmatic result sought by specific group".(p.92)

So, to recap, Robert and Janets' wish to ally themselves with people whom they regarded as "100 % with us", rather than "trying to nullify what we are doing" is

entirely, and indeed commonsensically, understandable within the political instrumentalities of their attempts to help the unemployed kids. However, our understanding of the meaning and significance of these two categories of significant others would be importantly incomplete if it did not pay attention to their meaning and significance to Robert and Janet in terms of their values to do with being seen as particular individuals of competence, significance and worth. In relation to existing theory, it is necessary to move out of the literature of power and politics to psychological and social-psychological theory about self and self-image.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF THEORY

##### (i) The Importance of Self-esteem

Coopersmith (1967) describes self-esteem as "...the evaluation that the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself; it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy. In short, self esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds." (p.4; see also Cohen, 1968, Rosenberg, 1965, Gergen, 1971 as some of many similar definitions)

A person's feelings of self-esteem, or what has also frequently been called self-worth, has often been seen as central in his psychology. Thus, for example, Allport (1937) proposed that " Self-esteem enters into all sentiments and traits" (p171). Rokeach, 1973, has argued that:

"This sentiment or attitude of self-regard must be accorded a more central status within the total belief system than other attitudes or values for at least two reasons. First, it has a self-reflexive quality about it that other attitudes and values do not possess. More important, self-conceptions are activated in virtually every situation a person may find himself in; one's performance in every situation is more or less routinely judged for its bearing on self-conceptions. In contrast, other attitudes and values are activated only by certain relevant objects and situations and are otherwise not activated."(p.216)

The idea that a person's feelings of self-esteem or self-worth are fundamental to his psychological well being pervades the psychological and social-psychological literature. Thus, for example, Rogers (1951, 1961) gives the 'rule' of self acceptance or self regard a central place in his "client-centred" therapy methods that is, the tendency of the person "...to perceive himself as a person of worth, worthy of respect rather than condemnation."(1951, p.138).

Maslow,(1970), whose hierarchy of needs model has had such a significant influence on the human relations school of organization theory, and thus to the methods and approaches of O.D. practitioners, proposes that:"All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions) have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high, evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others ."(p.45). He goes on to elaborate this idea as follows:

"These needs may therefore be classified into two subsidiary sets. These are, first, a desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Second we have what we may call a desire for reputation or prestige defining it as respect or esteem from other people, status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation."(p.45)

Many other writers have also related 'positive' self-esteem to 'well-adjusted behaviour, suggesting that low self-esteem leads to 'unhealthy' behaviour, such as over-conformity, lack of imagination and creativity, and inflexibility (e.g., Linton and Graham, 1959, Coopersmith, 1967), over-dependence or defensiveness (e.g., Rosenberg, 1965), authoritarianism (e.g., Boshier, 1969).

### (ii) Personal Evaluation

Several writers have pointed to the way in which a person comes to evaluate his own worth in terms of the relation between aspirations and achievement. Thus Cohen (1968) suggests that "self-esteem may be viewed as a function of the coincidence between an individual's aspirations and the achievement of those aspirations." (p.383). This is similar to William James' well-known definition of self-esteem, that it is "...determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the numerator our success. Thus self esteem =  $\text{Success} / \text{pretensions}$ ." (p.310). A final example of the way the way in which it is suggested that a person comes to see himself as "capable, significant, successful and worthy" is from Rokeach (1973): who suggests that a person asks himself:

"Does my total performance in this situation-what I said, what I did, and most important, what it signifies about myself-measure up to whatever conception I have of myself as a competent person? as a moral person? Most, if not all, activities a person engages in end, at least implicitly, with some evaluation of his performance. To the extent that a person perceives a discrepancy between self-conceptions and performance, he experiences it emotionally as a "felt difficulty" or state of "self-dissatisfaction". (p.226)



(iii) The Evaluations of Others and the Search for Support

However, most conceptions of self-evaluation stress primarily the social context in which it takes place, where answers to the kinds of questions posed by Rokeach often come from paying attention to the evaluations of others, within a perspective articulated by Mead (1934) as follows: "The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience." (p. 140) Thus, for example a considerable body of work (e.g., that edited by Suls and Miller, 1977) has been devoted to exploring and elaborating Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory, which proposes that:

"There exists in the human organism a drive to evaluate his opinions and abilities.... To the extent that objective, non-social means are not available, people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with the opinions and abilities of others." (pp 117-118)

The social underpinning of self conceptions and evaluations is captured by Cooley's (1902) notion of the "looking-glass self", in the following famous passage:

"A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggests the second element, the imagined judgement which is quite essential. The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind." (p. 159)

The social basis for our evaluations of ourselves, linked to the idea that it is generally important for us to believe ourselves to be "capable, significant, successful and worthy" has led to the view that we tend to prefer to associate with those who offer support for these sorts of conceptions of ourselves. It is a proposition put for-

ward by a wide variety of writers who would place themselves under different theoretical 'labels'-symbolic interactionism, social exchange theory, interpersonal congruency theory, and so on.

Thus, for example, Blau's(1964, 1974) social exchange theory holds the view that relationships involve the "...voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others"(1964,p.91). He suggests that the rewards individuals seek from interpersonal relationships can lead to feelings of personal obligation, gratitude and trust, where "...the specific benefits exchanged are sometimes primarily valued as symbols of the supportiveness and friendliness they express, and it is the exchange of underlying mutual support that is the main concern of the participants."(ibid,p. 95). Foa and Foa( 1974) provide a more detailed six-fold classification of the rewards individuals seek from interpersonal relationships which includes not only goods, money, information but also love (affection), warmth, support and status-judgements of a persons esteem and prestige.

Secord and Backmans' interpersonal congruency theory (1964,1965) argues that a person attempts to maintain a state of congruency between three components: an aspect of himself, his interpretation of his own behaviour with respect to that aspect, and his beliefs about how another person behaves and feels with regard to that aspect of himself. A state of congruency exists when his own actions and those of the other imply definitions of self congruent with his conceptions of himself. They suggest that one of the

ways a person seeks to gain the support for important aspects of his self concept is by associating with people who, in various ways, offer the relevant validation.

Rosenberg (1968) similarly points out how we selectively seek support in our relationships and suggests that:

"Friendship is the purest illustration of picking one's propaganda. For it is characteristic of a friend that not only do we like him, but he likes us. To some extent, at least, it is probable that we like him because he likes us ... The upshot of friendship selection is thus to expose people to implicit and explicit interpersonal communications which reflect well on themselves, whereas they hear much less from people who dislike them. All friendship, then, is at least, to some extent a "mutual admiration society", whereby each partner helps to sustain the desired self-image of the other." (pp. 343-344).

From a different perspective following particularly in the footsteps of Schutz (e.g., 1970) Berger and Luckmann (1966) stress the "identity" maintenance role of a person's significant others, suggesting that:

"To retain confidence that he is indeed who he thinks he is, the individual requires not only the implicit confirmation of this identity that even casual everyday contacts will supply, but also the explicit and emotionally charged confirmation that his significant others bestow on him." (p. 170).

These ideas follow very closely Gerth and Mills' (1953) proposition, within the tradition of symbolic interactionist sociology, that:

"The image of self which a person already possesses and which he prizes leads him to select and pay attention to those others who confirm this self-image, or who offer him a self-conception which is even more favourable and attractive than the one he possesses. This principle leads the person to ignore, if he can, others who do not appreciate his prized or aspired-to self-image or who debunk his image or restrain the development of it." (p. 86)

Within the dramaturgical perspective Mangham (1978) argues that "The individual actor seeks support for the claims he makes for his self-concept" (p. 42) and this is also an important feature of Goffman's (e.g., 1959) impression-managing actor.

McCall and Simmons' (1966) propose that "... one of man's most distinctive motives is the compelling and perpetual drive to acquire support for his idealized conception of himself" (p. 75). In common with a dramaturgical position they explicitly pay attention to the complex and differentiated nature of people's self-conceptions, a person's plurality of "social selves" (c.f. James 1980, Harre and Secord, 1972). They talk of what they call a person's role identities: "his imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of that position." (p. 67), and argue that a person seeks support and legitimation for these role-identities:

"This support is not simply for his claim to the right to occupy the social position in question or for the conventional rights and duties of the accompanying social role, although role-support includes these points as a minimum. Nor is role support to be equated simply with prestige, status, esteem, or social approval of one's conduct in a given social position.

It is instead a set of reactions and performances by others the expressive implications of which tend to confirm one's detailed and imaginative view of himself as an occupant of a position. Role-support is centrally the implied confirmation of the specific contents of one's idealized and idiosyncratic imagination of self." (pp.72-73)

Among the various ways they suggest a person can gain this support is to associate with those audiences who offer it and deprecate those who do not.

ROBERT AND JANETS SELF-WORTH CONCERNS

Thus it is, that from a wide variety of different theoretical perspectives we can see a theme that is at least in some general way (for each perspective would of course stress more or less different aspects and practical implications) recognizably consistent: that individuals care deeply about their own worth and significance and how others assess that worth, and tend to prefer to associate with those who offer support for those important aspects of their self-conceptions.

It is a theoretical arena that I had not paid much attention to prior to this research. In the introduction to this chapter I suggested that it is something most of us 'know' about human relationships, but it is an aspect of them which is not regarded as the business of those practitioners concerned with helping policy-makers handle their complex problems about 'the world out there'. I believed myself to be a reasonably sophisticated and sensitive practitioner who realized and practised the importance of paying attention to interpersonal process, in the client-consultant situation, not to 'ride over' the client's self-esteem, to encourage members of a team to listen to and be careful with one another, and so on.

My focus of interest and concern, however, was on how people can be helped to listen more carefully to one another and share the different wisdom and knowledge about that 'out there' problem. Although this is clearly closely related to issues of self-esteem in a process of listening that treats another's knowledge about his world as worthy of

attention and consideration, the theoretical relationship was treated by me at a relatively intuitive level. The reason for this is, I suspect, because I disliked (and still do) some popular manifestations of self-esteem and self-acceptance theories, such as encounter groups and 'personal-growth' movements. They seemed to me to encourage inner-directedness which borders on narcissism, and with exhortations to act with others on the basis of worth, love, trust, to offer ~~little~~ help for handling relationships involving conflict, power, and political rivalry.

However, I was continually confronted with data about Robert and Janet which I could eventually only make sense of in terms of fundamentally important self-worth and social approval concerns. These were not, I believe, deliberately and rationally pursued by them, as by those who, for example, instrumentally seek to achieve X or Y in order to enhance their status with particular groups. Nevertheless, these concerns coloured intensely their thinking about others in their complex problem in ways suggested by the last section.

#### (i) Self-Evaluation

Some of this data was described in the last two chapters showing how Robert and Janet's conceptions of themselves were of crucial importance in their attributions of power to others. I described how they believed themselves to be the sort of people others would not "take seriously" or regard as worth "listening to" and that they lacked self-confidence

in their abilities to think and act effectively about their complex problem. For Janet this was grounded in a belief that she lacked vital experience and knowledge. "They don't take me seriously, they see me as somebody young and inexperienced"; "We need him because he knows so much more about what to do than us". Robert had a deeper sense of personal inadequacy because of his lack of 'cleverness' and 'brightness': "When I compare myself with him, I am not foolish, but I am not bright. What makes a man clever is the qualifications he has got. He has the flow of words. He can talk to the hierarchy whereas I cannot and have to think out the way the words are used".

In this way Robert and Janet were clearly evaluating themselves, in the "personal judgement of worthiness" that Coopersmith(op.cit)defines as self-esteem. This evaluation came from their frequent experiences of being ignored or 'not taken seriously' by those to whom they went for money, within their voluntary group, and so on.

They also came from, as the quotes above show, their comparison of themselves with others. As I have said, that people "evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with the opinions and abilities of others" (Festinger, 1954,p118) is the subject of a considerable body of work under the label of Social Comparison Theory. Kelly (1955) in his Personal Construct Theory argues that "... much of (a person's) social life is controlled by the comparisons he has come to see between himself and others"

(p. 131). This theme is one I shall return to in the next chapter, as a crucial aspect of the cognition of 'modelling' not only self, but others.

However, there are two further points in terms of relation to existing theory that I wish to make here. I have talked about Robert and Janet's low level of confidence and this could also be expressed in terms of a low level of self-esteem. Yet I do not wish to make this as some overriding, general statement about their evaluations of themselves. A great deal of experimental work has referred to a person's 'low' or 'high' self-esteem as if this were static, and not a matter of situation and context. William James (1890) points out how our self-esteem relates to what is important to us, rather than to everything about ourselves.

"I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am content to wallow in the grossest ignorance of Greek. My deficiencies there give me no sense of personal humiliation at all. Had I 'pretensions' to be a linguist, it would have been just the reverse ... So our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and to do." (p. 310).

To go further than James, the person who "backs himself" to be a psychologist in his working environment may be more interested in his worth as a father or a husband or a squash player outside that environment. This is the idea behind McCall and Simmons' notion of "role-identity", a person's "imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as the occupant of that position" (1966,p.67) Robert and Janet's self-esteem concerns were that they should



be seen as worthwhile and competent individuals to effectively tackle and manage their problems to do with the kids, including to persuade others to give them the support they needed. As Diggory (1966) points out: "Man then might be viewed as a purposive instrument, and might evaluate himself in quite the same terms as he evaluates any other instrument." (p. 418)

Again the issue of context in thinking about problem-significant others is one that is of considerable theoretical and practical importance and a theme which I shall be returning to in the next chapter.

The second point I wish to address is the complexity of Robert and Janet's conceptions of themselves. Despite their lack of self-confidence they did believe themselves to be people worth listening to, and Robert spoke for them both when he cried despairingly of the "private sector" in their voluntary group. "Why don't they listen to us? Why do they always want to lecture? I don't understand.". As Turner (1968) points out in ways that are still relevant to a great deal of psychological theory and research:

"Some discussions and empirical investigations have proceeded upon the basis of a distinction between "ideal-self" and an empirically based self-image. But a formulation of this sort errs in assuming that the individual divorces his conception of what he "really is" from his ideal". (p. 98).

So it was with Robert and Janet. Their conceptions of what they were and what they wanted to be and were not were overlapping and not easily distinguishable. They both desperately wanted to have their worth and competence confirmed-or their

doubts about themselves denied.

(ii) Self-oriented Values as the Definers of Problems

There are several bases on which I make the last assertion, each of which also makes a statement about the significance of their self-worth concerns in their thinking about and defining the significance of others in their complex problem.

Firstly, that others should support rather than reject their worth and competence was an essential element in their framework for learning about, and evaluating others. Thus, for example, when recounting their meetings with people for the first time, they invariably made some reference to whether or not the other "listened" to them or rather "lectured", often accompanied by some conclusion about whether the other "likes us" or "is dubious about us". Indeed, some statement about attitudes towards them always emerged somewhere in the descriptions or 'model' of another.

However, it was suggested in Chapter Three that in the theoretical context of the psychology of problem construction, one operational definition of a value is as the definer of problems for a person when he construes some event as threatening the maintenance or attainment of the preferred states of affairs which they reflect. Robert and Janets' values about self-worth emerged most manifestly in their considerable distress, - their construction of problems - at what they saw as rejection of themselves as worthwhile, competent individuals, particularly when this rejection came

from people whom they had to work with on a day to day basis.

This was most particularly the case with Robert. Indeed, there was a period of several months during the project when his continual need to express and discuss with us and Janet his puzzlement, anger, hurt at the construed rejection of him by other members of their voluntary group appeared almost obsessive. So much so that Janet on several occasions asked him in exasperation to "Stop always wanting to talk about them. It's stopping us getting on with what we have got to do with the kids".

Frequently the question "Why? Why are they being like this?" followed statements like the following about several members of the group, including the Chairman, by Robert:

"He and I go back a long way. We were friends, he used to listen, and make sense out of my nonsense. But he has moved away from where we were both coming from. He is no longer thinking on the same levels as I."

"He hasn't got the confidence in me to see the hierarchy. When we go and see people, he tells me in a round-about way to listen and not to say anything".

"Now he is there all the time, telling me how I should do this and that. It is like the captain coming into the galley and telling the cook what to do, when he knows what to do".

It was not merely people who had been "friends" that Robert became concerned about. For example, there was one member of

the group whom Robert had never liked whose reactions to himself were also a matter of considerable anxiety. "When we say things he gives a sort of look, he grins, as if to say we are foolish." ... "This man he thinks we are a joke".

Janet did not manifest the same almost obsessive concern with others' attitudes towards her, but she too, on various occasions made reference to her sense of anxiety and feelings of rejection, in statements like the following:

"They are always criticising us, niggling at us that we are not doing things the right way".

"He is always telling us what to do, as if we can't ever work anything for ourselves."

"They do not take us seriously".

However, Janet's self-worth and approval concerns were particularly manifested in her explosions of hurt and irritation at what she saw as Robert's own tendency to undermine her own position with others, and indeed, to underestimate her himself. She described how Robert frequently insisted on doing "all the talking" at meetings and how his own behaviour tended to make others see her merely in the role of Robert's follower.

"He never lets me say anything. Whenever I start to say anything he always interrupts. He always wants to be the main person".

"He makes everyone think I am his right-hand man".

Janet also felt that Robert underestimated her own ability himself, "He is always going on about the fact that I am

young" - and on several occasions at the beginning of the project she was clearly chagrined by Robert's insistence that all matters of significance be discussed with us before actions were taken: "I just think that sometimes we could talk about it and work things out for ourselves".

(iii) 'Task' and 'Identity' - Directed Interactions

Thus it was, in terms of the practical significance of these concerns, that Robert's intense hurt and anxiety about the way others appeared to be rejecting rather than supporting his image of himself led him to want to spend a considerable amount of time and cognitive energy attempting to understand and talk about those rejecting others. The problem of others could reject them became at these times of more significance to him than how he could, with Janet, plan and tackle their project to help the kids, as Janet, as I have shown, complained.

Tensions caused by Janet's distress at Robert's own behaviour towards her, leading her on several occasions to want to leave the project, meant that there were several meetings during the course of the year that we spent with them talking about nothing else but their interpersonal relationship and how they might function more carefully and effectively as a team.

Turner (1968) distinguishes between what he calls "identity-directed" and "task-directed" interactions. The former are those in which attention is, "primarily directed by each member's concern about how others feel toward him ...

validation of a particular self-conception becomes the guiding consideration." In identity interactions, he suggests, focus of attention upon the others' attitudes to his own self-image leads to situations where, for example, "discussions which are manifestly concerned with tasks are manipulated and interpreted as indicators of credit and blame." (pp. 101-102). In contrast, task directed interactions are those "... directed towards a goal that requires the collaboration of two or more people, and the attitudes of participants towards one another are means and conditions rather than ends". (p. 101).

Turner also points out that interactions do not neatly and distinctly separate into these two categories. For example, he suggests that the more intimate and comprehensive a relationship, the more difficult it is to distinguish between them, and often what began as a task-directed interaction can shift into the other kind; when the person

"... perceives a discrepancy between self-image and self-conception which threatens to call into question his self-conception. We assume that self-consciousness is like a lens that brings the stimuli from the passing social situation into focus, so that they become recognizable as self-imagery." (p. 105; my emphasis)

Turner's ideas seem to me to accurately capture the nature of much of Robert and Janets', particularly Robert's, interacting with and thinking about others. Often so called task relationships to do with helping unemployed kids became relationships in which the others' affirmation or denial of important aspects of their self-concepts became of crucial importance. Their values about themselves, and how others

thought of them were indeed an ever present "lens" for construing the attitudes and actions of others with respect to themselves, not in a self-conscious, deliberative way but becoming salient, "adjusted into focus", when threatened. As McCall and Simmons (1966) suggest:

"Many of our daily role-performances are, of course, so routine, even habitual, that we are scarcely conscious of them. Their crucial importance for some of our major identities may be brought home to us only when they are impeded, interrupted, or called into question. Only then do they pose real problems of legitimation." (p. 95)

This last quote can also be related to the point made earlier about the inappropriateness of treating our self-conceptions and feelings of self-worth as if they were static and not a matter of context, as in for example, in many of the techniques for discovering a person's self-concept such as Q sorts, self-concept report and rating scales and 'completion' tasks. (e.g. Complete the sentence/write an essay, beginning "I am ..."). Turner (op.cit) suggests that:

"The self-sense is not discovered in quiet reflection but in the course of vigorous effort, especially when that effort brings the person into rivalry with other persons. In more general terms we can contrast the treatment of self-conception as a passive object - implied in many of the contemporary studies of self-conception - with the assumption that the sense of self arises in connection with active striving in the face of obstacles. It is a simple step to the observation by Dewey that behavior becomes self-conscious when it is blocked in some fashion." (p. 99)

Although I do not agree with Turner that we cannot learn about ourselves through "quiet reflection" what we learn is likely to be a different order of data from that which is learned and important in the context of "vigorous effort"

such as attempting to manage a complex problem. This point has some relevance to the kinds of arguments, for example, made in an earlier chapter about research methods for learning about how a person construes himself and others in his organizational world.

#### THOSE WHO SHARE MY VALUES AND VALUE ME

It is processes such as these, when "task-directed" interactions become identity-directed interactions, as important aspects of our relevant self-conceptions become threatened and therefore highly salient, that we can see underlying what are generally referred to as the interpersonal dynamics of individuals working together. We can see them, for example, in the following extract from Jones and Lakins' fictionalized case study.

"Never before had (Johnson) seen a consultant who remotely resembled the visitor. He took an immediate dislike to his air of intellectualism and superiority which, he thought, was typical of business academics. Others might have regarded the visitor as a rather comic, if not pathetic, character, but Johnson felt differently; he felt slightly threatened by him.

Johnson's opening remarks were fairly hostile and throughout the rest of the meal the conversation was competitive ... After lunch in the relative privacy of his office, Johnson said to Leyland:

"What a twit!"

Leyland agreed. Gray's (the consultant) opinion of Johnson was scarcely more charitable. He thought him to be vain, opinionated, and pompous."(pp63-64)

The above is just one example of a book which describes an organizational world entirely recognizable to us and is full of characterizations and descriptions of interpersonal relationships which crucially affected the alliances made, the battles fought, and therefore the politics which emerged,



in ways which often had little to do with 'rational' deliberative assessments of political instrumentalities -; let alone the apolitical, impersonal world offered by the prevailing literature in problem-solving and planning.

In this section I wish to show how Robert and Janet's self-worth concerns were not simply part of the ebb and flow of social interaction, important, complicated, but nevertheless categorizable within an 'interpersonal' box. Rather they fundamentally underlined the meaning and significance, and categorization, of those whom they saw as their trusted allies "those who are 100% with us", and their intensely disliked opponents "those who are trying to nullify what we are doing" in their efforts to help the unemployed kids; for whom a more apt categorization than allies and opponents could be 'those who do/do not share my values and do/ do not value me', as "friends" and "enemies".

Thus, those who were "100% with us" were significant not only as offering practical assistance in their project but also because they offered support to their 'prized image of self' as competent, worthwhile people.

"The beauty of the man is, he really listens" (Robert)

"He is sincere and he is always dead straight with us. He is 200% with us, he's no joke". (Robert)

"He always asks us what we think at meetings. I think he is impressed with people who really work and he likes us because he knows we do push things on, and we are sincere." (Janet)

"He is with us all the way. I think he likes a lot"

(Janet)

Our own relationship with them was an example. We fell into a 'sub-category' of those who were "100% with us" whom they called their "secret advisors", of whom there were also two others during the year of this research. If most of those who were "100% with us" were regarded by Robert and Janet as something like what Reisman(1981) calls "reciprocal" friends in the context of their problem situation, involving "intimate, close, ideal, "true" friendly relationships....characterized by loyalty and commitment between friends who regard one another as equals" (p.207); then a secret advisor lay somewhere between a reciprocal friendship and what Reisman calls a "receptive" friendship "in which one of the members is primarily a giver to the other; it is distinguished by the difference in statuses recognized by the members. This would be the case when one person seeks the friendship of a mentor or patron.." (ibid p.207) A secret advisor was someone trusted completely whom Robert and Janet could turn to in times of doubt and anxiety, who "can help make things clear to us" (Robert), "helps us work out what to do" (Janet). A secret advisor was also someone who "really listens...makes sense out of my nonsense" (Robert), above all someone whose support and commitment to them and their worth and significance they could feel totally sure of and go to for reassurance about that worth.

The significance of "those who are trying to nullify what we are doing" or "trying to get rid of us" was indeed that they were seen firstly by Robert and then eventually by Janet to be deliberately setting out to prevent them from having any central role in efforts to help the kids: "I still think he is, along with T.. working hard to nullify what we are doing. He does not want us there, he wants control."

(Robert); "I think they are trying to get rid of us. S.. keeps saying that I should get a job somewhere else". (Janet) These others also came to be seen as not caring about the kids at all and merely using the project as an instrument to other ends. Indeed for Robert "trying to nullify what we are doing" came to mean, in some cases, that the others wanted to sabotage the project altogether:

"I now believe that he isn't really interested in the kids. He's just interested in his politics. The kids don't matter really." (Janet)

"He's only involved so that he can get the credit."  
(Janet)

"We think that he's doing this because it helps him meet the people he wants to meet." (Janet)

"I didn't detect this before, but I think he was just linking up with us because it was one of the ways he could do what he wants to do about his politics, not for the kids at all." (Robert)

"When I compare myself with him, I am doing it from deep down where he is only doing it for himself."  
(Robert)

"I am suspicious of him. He is playing a love-and-hate game. He is interested in the workshop only to help his side, to get his own education thing set up."  
(Robert)

"We must not tell him what we are doing with the Council of Churches. I am convinced he is trying to nullify what we are doing with the kids and he will try and find ways to combat what we are doing with them."  
(Robert)

As the last quote indicates, the consequence of their beliefs about those who "are trying to nullify what we are doing" was that Robert and Janet wanted to spend a considerable amount of time attempting to predict what the others might do to hinder them, what power the others had to do so as I discussed in the last chapter, and how they could take the appropriate 'preventive' action against the others. I have spent some time discussing issues of power and politics and the likely usefulness of spending time thinking explicitly about them. There is no reason to suppose that the people whom Robert and Janet were considering in this way were not antagonistic towards them nor indeed would have preferred them not to interfere with their own right to define and control the "real problem" as they saw it. There is no reason to suppose that they did not have their own 'hidden agendas' in attempting to help the kids.

Whether, however, "The kids don't matter really" or whether the others were as deliberately and strategically attempting to get rid of Robert and Janet as they thought seems at least open to question. This belief comes not only from having met some of them myself, although not with Robert and Janet, but more importantly from the ideas that Janet offered before she herself came to see them as not "really interested in the kids" and "trying to get rid of us", in debates with Robert about whether the others were 'really' "trying to nullify what we are doing":

"I think T. is like this just because we are getting these contacts and beginning to be all secretive ourselves."

"I think S.. is just worried about whether the Youth

Service will still be in control, where he is going to fit in, where the kids will be, whether A.. will have a job, things like that."

"I think that M.. is with us and does want to help the kids. But he is under a lot of pressure from his bosses and he can't afford to be seen as a rebel."

However, whether or not Robert and Janet were right in their constructions of those they saw as against them, I believe that their self-oriented values were importantly implicated in those constructions; that the others' construed rejection of them as worthwhile, competent people was a critical factor in their categorization of "enemies". I say 'I believe' because at no time did Robert and Janet explicitly say something like 'I have decided he is trying to stop us from succeeding because he doesn't appear to value me and I feel desperately hurt and rejected', nor indeed do I think they actually thought in these terms.

The basis for my belief is that aspect I have already discussed, the enormous amount of attention they paid to others' attitudes towards their worth and competence; the considerable distress, particularly of Robert, when that worth appeared to be rejected; and the way in which much of their discussion about those who "are trying to nullify what we are doing" centred on these factors. It was also that which I shall describe in the next section, how their self-oriented values appeared to be the central 'pivots' in their reconstruing of others from being "100% with us" to "trying to nullify what we are doing".

A CYCLE OF POLITICAL AND INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS

About three months after the beginning of the project, Janet arrived at our regular weekly meeting looking particularly depressed. When asked what was the matter, she explained, almost despairingly, 'It's just awful in our group at the moment, We feel as if we are surrounded by spies. We don't know who to trust. Everybody is so hush-hush. We don't know who is sincere and who is false. We have come to the conclusion that the only people we can trust are each other', 'and you', she added as an afterthought. I remember hearing this with some surprise. Although Robert had for some time been expressing considerable anxiety, suspicion, anger, about most of the members of their voluntary group, Janet had been much more circumspect in her criticisms than Robert.

Indeed she often argued with him that he was wrong to assume that the group members were 'not really interested in the kids' offering other explanations for their occasionally hostile behaviour to them. There was another surprise later on in the meeting. After weeks of arguing with Robert about the chairman of the group, Janet announced that, 'I think (Robert) was right about T.. (the chairman). Last night he told us a lot more than he has ever said before. I don't any more think he really cares about the kids, he is only interested in his politics. I also think that he is trying to get rid of us.'

These statements by Janet represented a turning point in

her construction and definition of some other members of their voluntary group. During the period of this research several of the individuals who had been initially seen by Robert and Janet as "100% with us" became categorized as their polar opposites, "trying to nullify what we are doing". In all cases, this followed a similar pattern for both Robert and Janet although each of their 'patterns' differed.

For Robert, there was a period of transition, in which his feelings about the other showed considerable ambivalence, swinging from positive evaluations to negative ones and back again. As I described previously he frequently expressed considerable confusion, with statements such as, "I do not know why he is doing this", "I do not understand". He continually wanted to discuss the others with us and Janet, and to find explanations for the others' attitudes and actions that could make sense to him. Yet, despite this apparent attempt to undertake enquiry, there was in inevitability about the way in which the period of transition ended in the conclusion that the other was, in effect, an 'enemy'.

Janet exhibited a somewhat different pattern of change. First of all, she generally expended less cognitive effort on thinking about others, or explicating her thinking about others, than Robert, although it was she who initiated the requests on several occasions during the project, to explicitly "sort out" the others with us. She did not manifest quite the same intensity of ambivalence, anxiety and

confusion that Robert did. Furthermore, although the final result was usually the same, in that they both came to agree that the same others were "against them", her decision to categorize the others negatively was taken more slowly. As I mentioned earlier, she was prepared to consider first that their behaviour could be explained otherwise than because of deliberate attempts to sabotage them, including that their own behaviour, newly assertive and sometimes aggressive, their development of a range of new and powerful contacts, might be seen as threatening.

Yet she too came eventually to see the same people as deliberately working against them. And for both Robert and Janet, who specifically talked of the way the other "has changed", there appeared to be the same crucial set of factors which led to the final conclusion that the other "is dubious about us" (rather than "likes us"). These were to do with the others' rejection of them as friends, as worthwhile competent people, e.g.:

"He has changed. He is no longer the person I used to know. When before he would listen, would see my argument, now he no longer sees my unit of thought as constructive". (Robert)

"He and I go back a long way. We were friends, he used to listen. But he has moved away from where we were both coming from. He is no longer thinking on the same levels as I". (Robert)

"He is now so high up he has moved away from the grass



roots. He has forgotten where we were both coming from when we started this." (Robert)

"He was my friend, but he has changed. He has become dubious about me. When before I would ask him to lend me some money if I was short, now I would never ask him." (Robert)

"S.. has changed. I used to think he liked us, but now I do not think so. He keeps saying things like 'You look very tired, if you cannot cope, perhaps you ought to leave'." (Janet)

"He used to listen to us and talk to us. Now he is always lecturing and criticising as if we can't do anything right." (Janet)

When it was concluded that the other really was "dubious about" them, he very quickly became categorized as "trying to nullify what we are doing", or "trying to get rid of us". This categorization in turn led to a change in their other ways of construing the person, so that he became, in effect, the negative mirror image of what he had been before as someone who was "100% with us". He became someone for whom Robert in particular had an intensity of dislike which he found enormously difficult to conceal. We spent no small amount of time with them encouraging them to think about the ramifications of the actions they took with respect to others. Both of them knew that it was important to their efforts to help the kids that they were careful and instrumental in their relationships, not, for example, alienating somebody who had important 'political access' which could be turned

against them, just because they disliked and distrusted him.

However, as Robert freely admitted later in his meetings with us, when it came to enacting these espoused theories he found it extremely difficult, "This man is trying to nullify what we are doing. How can I be friends with him?"

Janet appeared to be much more successful at this kind of controlled interaction, and often castigated Robert for his impulsiveness, "The trouble with you is you always jump in without thinking. We cannot afford to make him angry. You know that. He is everybody's messenger. I think he knows more people than even we know about." However, she too sometimes talked about the way it was difficult "To be nice to somebody we don't like".

In terms of relation to existing theory I do not wish here to deal in any detail with issues of cognitive change, for I shall address these more fully in the next chapter. Rather, I wish to briefly draw attention to the features of this change that are specifically to do with Robert and Janet's self-oriented values. Negative relationships of disliking and enmity are virtually ignored in the literature, in noted contrast to the proliferation of ideas about processes of attraction and liking relationships. However, from the perspective of Personal Construct Theory, Duck (1973, 1977, 1979) argues that an individual seeks to validate his construct system through comparison with others, and that

liking and friendship relationships can be explained in terms of the mutual provision of that validation. He suggests that a person continually assesses his model of another for the degree of validation the other gives to his construct system, and that the breakdown of relationships occurs when that support is construed as no longer forthcoming. He does not specifically address the question of what particular aspects of his construct system a person may seek validation for. This seems to be a crucial question, because it is argued here, that there will be some differences and 'invalidation' that are simply relatively insignificant to a person, while others will be enormously significant; and, furthermore, that this is likely to be a matter of context. For example the significant 'validation' that is required in a relationship with a colleague at work may well be considerably different than that required from a friend outside the working environment. In this case the others' construed rejection of their ideas and role in the project crucially offended their 'prized image of self' as the basis for the relationship breakdown, and as implied by those who feature support for self in theories of friendship. We can also relate their redefinition of others to cognitive change theories. Most of these suggest that cognitive change comes from perceived inconsistency, although most also do not explore the way in which it is likely to be certain crucial inconsistencies, rather than any logical inconsistency between some isolated dyad or triad of cognitions, that are important in the process. However, Rokeach (1973) does offer ideas about the importance of self-cognitions and

self-oriented values. He suggests that:

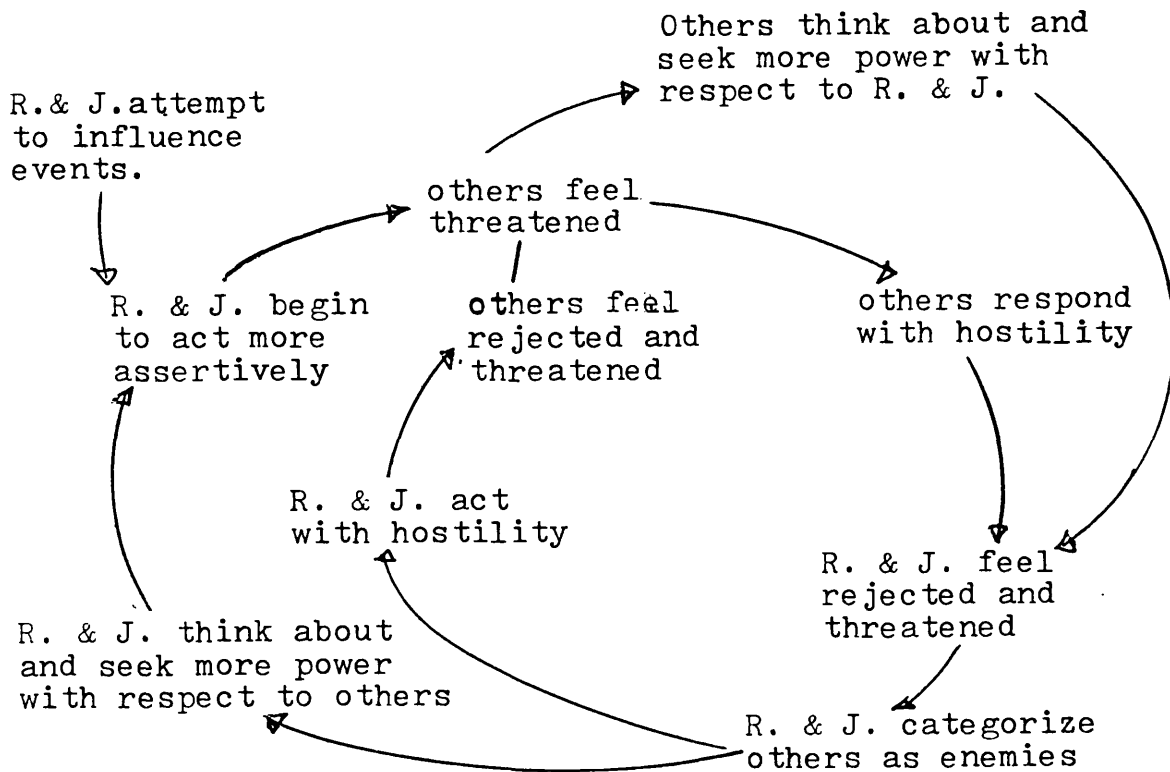
"In our theory, a contradiction within the cognitive system may be assumed to have no psychological import unless it implicates self-cognitions, in which case the inconsistency that generates a process of change is not between any two inconsistent cognitions..but between cognitions about oneself...and cognitions about one's total performance....It is what one's perceived performance in any given situation implies about self-conceptions that is crucial in determining whether a contradiction will be affectively experienced and, consequently, in determining whether it will lead to cognitive and behavioral change.(p.225)

Aronson (1978) offers a similar view when he argues that:

"... at the very heart of dissonance theory, where it makes its clearest and neatest prediction , we are not dealing with any two cognitions; rather, we are usually dealing with the self-concept and cognitions about some behavior. If dissonance exists it is because the individual's behavior is inconsistent with the self-concept". (p. 207)

In this case, we are not dealing with changes in constructions of self, but rather with the effect of constructions of self upon constructions of others. However, we can re-define those ideas in this context, by suggesting that in this case the crucial inconsistencies leading to change in models of others, were those which "implicated important self-cognitions".

We can also hypothesize about some of the crucial dynamics which underlay Robert and Janet's complexly interwoven political and interpersonal relationships in the following crude model which I suggest may have some relevance to understanding the dynamics which might occur in other situations, where people do not seem to me to always behave in the calculating, deliberative manner that is a feature of social exchange theory and indeed tends to characterize some some political models of organizational life:



#### AUDIENCE OTHERS IN A POLICY PROBLEM

Before commenting on any more general implications of what has been discussed so far, in this final section on the relationship between self-image and defining the significance of others, I shall consider the role of those who did not fit into the categorization of problem-significant others as active participants who can in various ways help or hinder the achievement of objectives (some of whom had the additional significance of supporting or rejecting crucial self-image values as I have just described). Rather they represented the audiences for performance in the problem.

##### (i) The Imagined Reactions of Others

Chapter Three described how black kids represented "the

really needy we want to help" for Robert and Janet. Black parents were for Robert another category of problem-significant others in the way in which it was integral to his conception of a desired future that he should succeed in influencing their definitions of reality, particularly about education, in ways he regarded as preferable for them and their children. The wish to influence black parents was accompanied by a vision of influencing what he called "the black community" as a whole - to value education, to seek to 'improve' themselves, to have what he called a "positive black consciousness": "We blacks must have a more positive black consciousness. We must work together for one cause, one direction."

The black community, black parents, black kids, were all labelled by Robert as "those I am doing this for". This vision of being the person who helped the blacks who were "looking to me to do something, they are looking to me to help their kids" was part of the image Robert had of himself as a leader of the black community.

Several writers have referred to the way in which others may represent an audience for a person. Thus, for example, Turner (1956) proposes that:

"Certain reference groups ... might usefully be regarded as audience groups to the individual. These are the groups by whom the actor sees his role-performance observed and evaluated, and he attends to the evaluations and expectations which members of the group hold towards him." (p. 328, my emphasis)

Shibutani (1961) has argued that:

"Every man acts, then, for some kind of audience, and it is important to know what this audience is and what kinds of expectations are imputed to it ... The reference group supports the values in terms of which a person estimates his own conduct; therefore, his line of activity depends upon the real or anticipated reactions of the other people for whom he is performing."  
(p. 257, my emphasis)

The notion of the importance of "real or anticipated reactions" of audience others is also expressed by McCall and Simmons (1966):

"The vicarious performances that loom prominently in the substance of any role-identity serve as proving grounds and rehearsal halls for actual performances. Imagined reactions of various others to these vicarious performances constitute important criteria for evaluating any possible plans of overt actions similar in content to these vicarious forms." (p. 69)

The "evaluations and expectations", "real and anticipated reactions" of the blacks towards his performance as their leader were a matter of considerable concern to Robert. And, as with values about his own self-esteem and worth, and Robert's value of being recognized by the blacks as one of their leaders (indeed preferably the only leader) was most strongly revealed in his intense anxiety when that image seemed to him to be threatened. Thus, for example, in the despair he felt on hearing the news that the application for a grant to the MSC and Youth Service had been refused, one of his main concerns was that: "What can I say to the black parents? They are trusting me to get what I promised. They will not understand why I have failed."

Over the many delays and set-backs of the project, he frequently referred to the fact that he was "under pressure from the black community" who were "trusting me to help them

and want to know what is happening". When discussing the way in which the "private sector" were refusing to give him the information and role in the decision-making processes of the group he felt appropriate, one expression of his concern was manifest in statements such as the following:

"I want to be in the know, not just for me, but because I am under pressure from the parents black community. They are asking me what is happening."

"Once I have been omitted from what is happening there is nothing for me to go back to the black community and say about what we are doing."

He was extremely disturbed, when he learned, inaccurately as it turned out, that he had been left out of a new action group that had been formed to consider issues of unemployment in the area. "I must be there. I must know what to tell the black parents". Here was also illustrated another feature of his self-image as a leader of the black community - that it should be recognized not only by the blacks, but also the whites whom he came into contact with: "How can they leave me out like this? I am the only relating factor to the black community. I am the one who knows them, who sees them every day."

I do not believe that Robert deliberately saw the project to help the kids as a means of enhancing his own position and status within the community but in these ways his values about that position and status, when threatened, importantly defined problems for him within the process of attempting to tackle his issue.



This feature of Robert's values about his image with the blacks, as indeed the dynamics of Robert and Janet's self-worth concerns, is also relevant to considering more generally the way in which a person's values, their dynamics and interrelationships, may operate in his issue. One way of rendering the complex and difficult concept of values operationalizable is to see them in terms of the goals and objectives which can represent the situation to be achieved in preference to the unsatisfactory or disquieting current situation. However, in a complex value system some values may become salient, not as states of affairs consciously worked towards but rather as constraints upon the acceptability of certain courses of action in ways that may not be pre-enactable by the individual himself until confronted with a threat to them; (or he is given the opportunity to explicitly explore the causes and consequences of events in his problem-reality with care and depth so that they can be pre-enacted.)

(ii) An Audience and Others

Returning specifically to Robert's 'audience others' of the black community, understanding their significance for him enriched my understanding of the meaning and significance of some of those whom he categorized as "trying to nullify what we are doing" in terms of his fears that they might undermine his image with the blacks. It made sense, for example, of the concern he showed when one of the members of the voluntary group became friendly with an older and leading member of the kids, and as a consequence of this relationship appeared to be becoming friendly with some of the kids and

parents. As Janet put it: "These kids, you see, and the parents, they are easily led. If S.. starts getting friendly with them, he could turn them against (Robert)".

The nature and significance of the black audience also made sense of Robert's concern about two other prominent members of the black community who, like Robert, tended to become involved in white dominated action groups. Both of them wanted to become involved in the project. Robert opposed this most strongly, giving various reasons, why they should not be involved and indeed should be regarded as positively "dangerous". He did so, I believe, mainly because they were rivals for his position as leader whose involvement would reduce the centrality of his own role.

The significance of the black audience also helped to explain the particular meaning of two 'negative reference groups' for Robert, those which Newcomb (1952) suggests a person "is motivated to oppose, or in which he does not want to be treated as a member." (p. 226). One such negative reference group for Robert comprised those whom he called "the professed middle class" blacks, of whom Robert often spoke, with irritation and anger. They were those who were the most economically successful and articulate in the black community, whom Robert spent a great deal of time with socially but who were the least susceptible to his influence. He described them as blind and selfish in their refusal to value the importance of education and the unity of blacks in "one cause, one direction".

"These professed middle class blacks come here, save their money, get a mortgage, then buy a car, and think they're living a life of ease. They like to think they are intelligent but they are not, they are ignoramuses".

"These professed middle class do not care about the black community. They send their kids away to private schools, think their kids are better than the others, and want to be segregated from the black community. They have no real black consciousness. They are forgetting where they are coming from, moving away from the grass roots."

Another negative reference group for Robert was those whom he called "professed Rastas." Robert was particularly concerned by the way in which Rastafarianism was an important influence upon some of the kids he was interested in helping, leading to their lack of interest in training and obtaining a job.

"Professed Rastatism is laziness, avoiding society. Real Rastas have a readiness to work, they work hard."

"These professed Rastas affect everything. They tell the kids to ignore what the teachers say, they make them not want to work. These professed Rastas don't want integration, they are against white authority."

I believe in both cases the significance of these negative reference groups can be understood in terms of the way they threatened Robert's desired role as leader of the blacks,

the first because these parents refused, recalcitrantly, to accept his influence, the second because "professed Rastaism" undermined his leadership of and influence over the kids.

(iii) Reference Groups in Problem Construction

If Janet had any 'audience others' that functioned for her in the same way as the blacks for Robert, we did not learn about them. However, to consider other situations than this case, organizations comprise networks of relationships in what it seems at least reasonable to consider the possibility of their being audience others whom a policy-maker takes into account as evaluators in some way of his performance; perhaps his peers, those upon whom he relies for promotion, his subordinates, perhaps some professional group of which he is a member, and so on. The particular meaning and significance of audience others may then differ considerably between different individuals and their different problem situations.

The idea that a person may pay attention to and psychologically 'make reference to' groups that are important to him has been conceptualized by the concept of reference groups, and indeed both Turner's and Shibutani's ideas about audiences are expressed in terms of roles of reference groups for a person. Many conceptions of reference groups offer a highly socialized model of man that would not for example have been readily applicable in a one-to-one fashion to Robert's complex relationship with the blacks.

He quite clearly did see himself as sharing their perspectives and values important in his problem situation, as for example "... that group, real or imaginary, whose standpoint is being used as the frame of reference of the actor" (Shibutani, 1961 , p.257 ) or "the source of values assimilated by designated individuals (who may or may not be members of the group)" (Merton, 1968) or "the source of the individual's major perspectives and values" (Turner, 1956, p.328 ).

However reference group theory does offer ways of considering the role others might play as audiences of one kind or another for a person. Thus, for example, one distinction that is commonly made is between reference groups of which a person is a member and those in which he aspires to become a member. The policy-maker may see the performance in his problem as a means of gaining entry, acceptance, within some group he feels outside of and wishes to 'enter'; the 'rules of the game' for entry may lead him to have some idea of the goals and standards which he must meet in the performance of his problem, as Sherif and Sherif(1969) suggest:

"The concept of reference groups is used to designate the source from which a person derives his goals and standards for erecting his aspirations and gauging his performance. Thus reference groups define aspirations that regulate the person's feelings of success and failure in related activities". (p. 418).

The aspirations may have been explicitly (or implicitly) set for him by a specific group (or individual) or be something he believes to be important with respect to some social

category or peer group many of the members of which he does not know personally - 'fellow academics', 'the O.D., or O.R. community', and so on. We can relate this also to Kelley's (1968) idea of the "comparison function" of a reference group, which is:

".. that serving as or being to a standard or comparison point against which a person can evaluate himself and others. We shall refer to this as the comparison function of reference groups. The group functions as a comparison reference group for an individual to the extent that the behavior, attitudes, circumstances, or other characteristics of its members represent standards or comparisons which he uses in making judgments and evaluations." (p.79 )

Thus, for example, Robert's conception of a preferred future was one in which blacks would take their place alongside whites, in the banks, in schools, with appropriate qualifications in various professions. "White professionals" was a social category with which he compared the current situation of the blacks, and their probable future situation, and which in his dream he saw blacks coming to gain acceptance and equality with, although they did not function in any particularly 'active' way in his problem.

Finally, Robert saw the blacks as being able to punish him, by denying him his desired image with them as the leader although this potential punishment was also almost certainly related to his own personal self-evaluations and concerns about the possibility of failing in the goals he himself had set for himself. The idea that a reference group can be one which "sets standards for an individual" (Merton, 1968) by meting out rewards and punishments for compliance or

non-compliance with these standards is another relatively common idea in reference group literature. It is captured by Kelley's (1968) idea of the normative function of reference groups:

"A group functions as a normative reference group for a person to the extent that its evaluations of him are based upon the degree of his conformity to certain standards of behavior or attitudes and to the extent that the delivery of rewards or punishments is conditional on these evaluations." (p.80 )

Thus, and consonant with the previously discussed ideas about power and politics in organizations which I do not wish to repeat here, a policy-maker may regard his audience others as being able to mete out quite specific rewards and punishments of serious kinds for the way he tackles his problem. Whatever specific 'role' any audience others might take for a policy-maker, it seems worthwhile for a consultant, for example, to learn something of this role when "his line of activity depends on the real or anticipated reactions of the other people for whom he is performing". Otherwise the policy-maker may act in ways that the consultant finds considerably puzzling.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter has discussed the self-image concerns of Robert and Janet and the way they affected their thinking about and categorization of others. It described how it mattered considerably to them that others supported rather than rejected their image of themselves as worthwhile, competent individuals within the context of their issue, and how, therefore, they paid a great deal of attention to others'

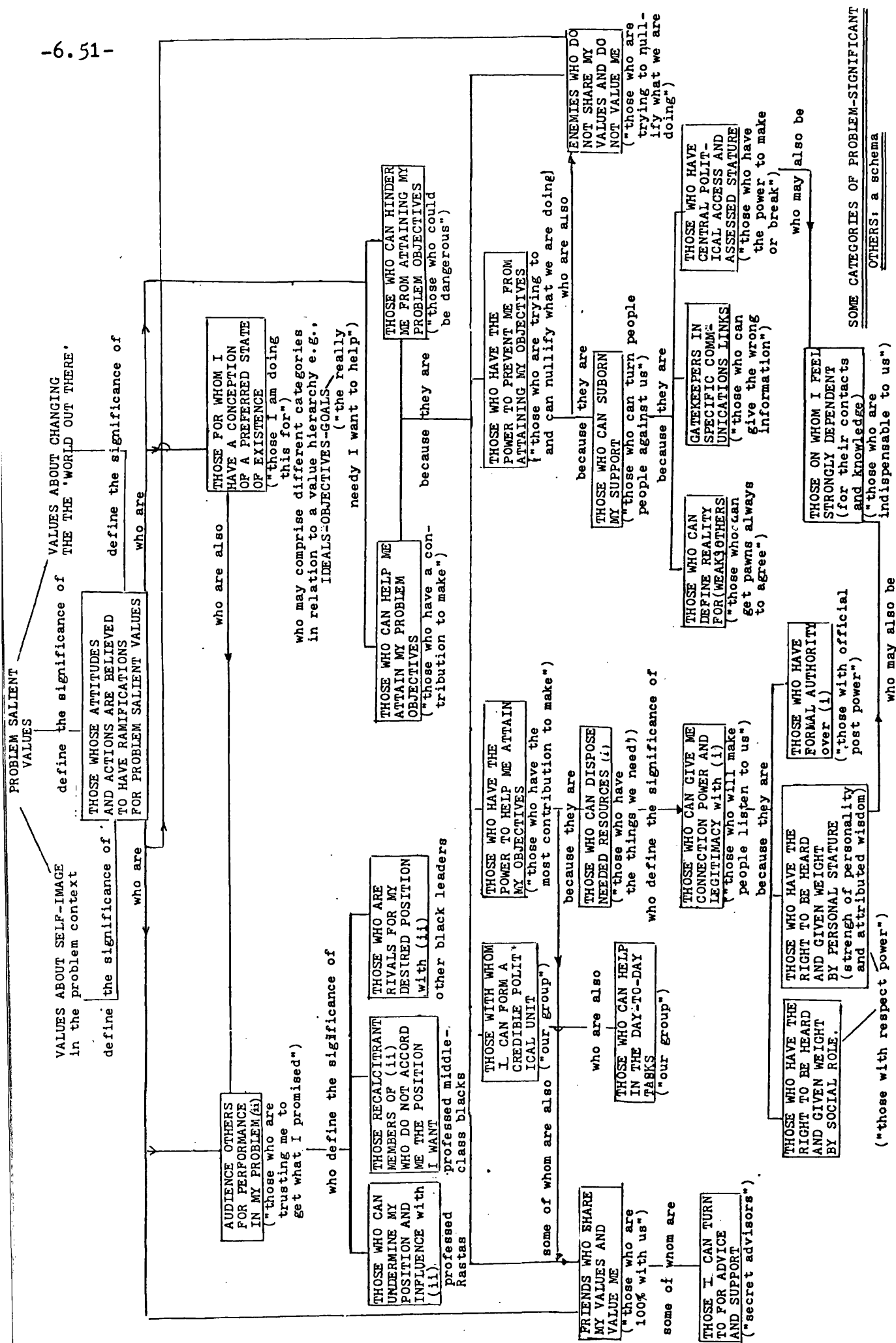
evaluations of them, so that construed rejection of them caused them problems in ways that could not fully be explained in terms of the instrumentalities of their attempts to help the unemployed kids. The interpersonal dynamics centred around their self-worth concerns , were, however, importantly interwoven with the meaning and significance and the categorization of those who "are 100% with us" and those "who are trying to nullify what we are doing". Finally I described how Robert's values about his image with the audience others of the blacks also defined problems for him when they were threatened and how they too underlined the significance of some others.

A number of further categories of significant others were also developed during the chapter and these are drawn together with those from Chapter Four in the schema shown on page 6.51.

#### (i) A Stance Towards Data

Can the findings of this chapter be generalized beyond this case? I have both implied and asserted, including with reference to existing theory, that they can. This does not mean, however, that I regard them as very precisely so. Thus in the last section, I described some of the different ways 'audience others' might operate for a policy-maker. I showed how Robert and Janet differed in this case in the manifestations of their self-worth concerns. Thus, for example, Robert wanted to spend considerably more time on talking about his rejecting others than Janet. He was less able to be instrumental and controlled in his interactions with





others than Janet. He more readily assumed that others were deliberately strategizing against them than her, and so on.

Taking the point of view of Heider (1958) that "... scientific psychology has a good deal to learn from common-sense psychology" (p. 5), our 'common-sense' ways of talking about ourselves and others frequently point to such differences.

When we say somebody "takes things very personally" or "takes things to heart" or is "hypersensitive" what we often mean is that the person appears to be particularly prone to see the actions and attitudes of others as threatening his own worth, or feels that some contradiction of his ideas or purposes is some slur upon that worth rather than a 'simple' disagreement about the best way to proceed on some matter. It also seems obvious that people differ in the degree to which they 'brood' on some attributed slur or see such a slur as a basis for continued dislike or antagonism.

Nor do I believe that we all want or expect the kind of close, committed loyalty and friendship with those we might work with on our complex problems that Robert and Janet would have preferred, anymore than we might need or want the reassurance and advice of a "secret advisor"(although many consultants may be something of the kind for their clients)

I do, however, believe, and I referred to a great deal of psychological and social-psychological literature as well as our own common-sense understandings, that people do care about how others see their worth and competence, images of themselves that may differ in different contexts, and that if they regard the actions and attitudes of others as threatening their image, they will experience problems. The

notion of the way in which "task-directed" interactions may become "identity-directed" interactions seems to me to be a useful theoretical tool for considering the nature of the interpersonal dynamics that can occur between people who work together. The crude model drawn in the chapter seems to me to have some potential relevance as a framework for understanding some of the dynamics of political action by individuals who may not always deliberately calculate the usefulness or otherwise of others to the prosecution of particular ends, in the way suggested by social exchange theory or some political models of organizations.

Let us take, for example, the situation of a consultant who does attempt to offer explicit help with issues of power and politics in a client's policy problems. If he finds that the client insists upon spending time developing strategies with respect to some others whose believed intent to sabotage the client's efforts does not seem to make any 'rational' sense within the context of the client's beliefs and values about means and ends that he has learned about; then he might at least consider whether or not what is involved may be some of the interpersonal dynamics to do with self-image, self-worth, feelings of hurt and rejection, that I have talked about in the chapter.

If a consultant finds that his client seems to be extremely reluctant to accept certain actions in ways that do not seem to rationally make sense within the context of the client's own problem-reality as the consultant has learned about it he may also consider and attempt to learn whether there are

some values that he has not learned about which have become salient as constraints, and that these may be to do 'audience others'!

(ii) The Role of the Consultant

A considerable number of people have built their professional lives around helping individuals in organizations handle more effectively the kinds of interpersonal issues discussed in this chapter. However, as I said in the introduction, the prevailing perspective in problem-solving and policy analysis would argue that these are distinct phenomena which it is not relevant or important to take into account in working on problems to do with changing some aspect of 'the world out there'.

In this thesis the view is taken that it is relevant and important to pay attention to and attempt to learn about any role that a policy-maker's self-image values may play in his construction of his problem-significant others. The consultant may of course have to work at the implicit level, even within the context of a relationship of trust, with some of this data which may be at a level of illegitimacy higher than any to do with power politics. How many of us, for example, feel able to admit publicly to strong feelings of inadequacy or hurt, even to close and trusted colleagues? It seems much more acceptable to talk of ambition, promotion, "being in a position to influence events", and so on. Even in this case, where Robert and Janet were prepared to talk about such things, the relationship between those feelings and their construction of the deliberative opposition of others who had rejected them was not explicitly discussed.

I made the connection, however, without assuming I have some special sensitivity that others do not to the evidence of people feeling threatened, hurt, 'obsessive' about others and so on, and no doubt others would have made the connection much more quickly than I. And there are ways one can approach the gaining of explicit data within the context of a relationship of trust. The question "Is there anybody else who is interested in the way you handle this problem and what happens as an outcome?", "Why?", "Does this matter to you?", "Why?", seem to me to be questions that can be asked as a basis for beginning dialogue and learning about the role and nature of any audience others. Careful probing about why this person is seen as an ally, or that person as an opponent will give insights that not doing so will not.

I have discussed how individuals often construct images of others and self through some process of comparison. By careful listening to the way a person describes others and by encouraging the person to articulate how he sees himself as similar or different from others a consultant can also learn something about his client's self-image, and at least obtain important clues to the client's evaluation of his own worth and competence. In the next chapter I shall explore this aspect of thinking about self and others further with reference to Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (1955) and the repertory grid technique which might be used for this kind of learning and analysis, not only by consultants with their clients, but by policy-makers for themselves.

Why bother with this learning? Because, as I have said, and as many good consultants are already well aware, the

consultant who is not sensitive to this kind of data may find his clients acting in ways that are considerably puzzling to him, with potentially detrimental consequences to his own credibility and effectiveness with his clients. But also because the consultant may be able to offer important and useful help, explicitly, to his clients in terms of their self-image concerns and their implications, if any, for the management and control of relations with problem-significant others. In the same way as his clients may find it helpful to explore explicitly their constructions of powerful others, so they may find explicit analysis of the expectations, power, responses of any audience others (who may well be another category of powerful others) importantly useful in the design and management of appropriate problem-outcomes.

If a client finds himself puzzled, distressed, 'distracted' by actions and attitudes of others who reject and undermine him, then he may find it importantly helpful to be given an opportunity to consider explicitly why it is that he is so distressed, what seem to be the nature of the dynamics he is caught up in, including the meaning and significance given by the others to his own behaviour, and what are their significant ramifications for the objectives he seeks to attain. Thus from a dramaturgical perspective, Mangham (1978) has argued that:

"Once the social actor becomes aware of his part, becomes sufficiently detached from it so as not to play it without thought and reflection, he sees the possibility of changing the way he performs. ... Thus the art of the interventionist lies in capitalizing upon the amount of role-distance there is already in the system, in increasing the amount of role-distance

and in creating opportunities for as many actors as possible to take a metatheatrical perspective on their activities. From such a perspective the actors become aware of their own theatricality, the nature of the parts they play, and the scripts they create, sustain, and can transform." (p. 97)

In the last chapter it was argued that there is a rôle for tools to assist the explicit modelling of a person's construction of powerful others for better "prediction and control". The need for such tools, to facilitate the self-conscious and reflective management of relations with others seems no less relevant to the aspects of 'thinking about others' discussed in this chapter. For indeed the latter may be integrally, crucially and complexly linked with the former.

If we relate the discussion of this chapter with that of the last I have been suggesting a role for the consultant which is considerably broader than that which is typically associated with policy analysis, one in which the consultant's own "technical" and "interpersonal" theorizing intertwine in seeking modes of helping the client with his own "technical" and "interpersonal" (Argyris and Schon, 1974) theorizing, including those to do with power and politics. As I indicated in the last chapter I do not wish to suggest that taking on such a role will always be easy, or possible, or appropriate. In particular, the consultant will be attempting to explicitly address with the client data that is likely to be of considerable sensitivity or illegitimacy. I suspect that it is a significant step to move from discussions of, say, interpersonal style, or political ambitions and opposition to certain others, to an approach which includes (and I

am talking prospectively here) efforts to explicitly model problem-significant others in order to better understand them and perhaps manipulate them. There will be many contexts in which a consultant, and his clients, will have to operate at the implicit level with some crucial but highly sensitive data, particularly if the client is a team whose problem-significant others for its members include each other. Not least of the complexities is that consultant is likely to be faced with choices about whom he wishes to help at a possible cost to some others. As we have argued elsewhere:

"It is the acknowledgement of knowledge as person-based rather than organization-based, in organizations where power, influence, manipulation are integral parts of the way individuals achieve preferred ends, that leads us to assert for ourselves a self-conscious choice about whom as clients we wish to assist. Making such a choice means for us to be ready to use appropriate tools to provide effective policy influence..(Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p.162)

Yet despite complexities such as these, the argument still seems cogent-that consultants and policy makers who do not have available to them tools for explicit analysis of problem-significant others, if and when this aspect of problem construction seems troubling and confusing are missing potentially important and relevant help. Furthermore, with a widened role may come significant rewards to the consultant in terms of the range of arenas he is seen to be able to work with-and himself influence the outcomes of.



## CHAPTER SEVEN:

### THE COGNITION OF MODELLING OTHERS(i):CONSTRUING AND RECONSTRUING

#### INTRODUCTION

When a person infers that someone who laughs a lot is a 'nervous sort', or that someone who wears glasses is likely to be intelligent, or that a subordinate's invitation to dinner is an attempt to 'curry favour', that person is utilizing what Bruner and Tagiuri (1954), and many others since, have called an 'implicit personality theory', about the nature of human beings, about 'social types' or about particular individuals. A great deal of experimental work has been carried out to explore the way in which people will make inferences about others on the basis of certain limited information. Not untypically in these experiments, subjects have been presented with items such as trait-listings or photographs, or both, and asked, for example, to indicate the inferential relationships between one trait and any of the others, or to indicate what traits a person in a photograph might have. As Cook (1979) points out, "Too much person perception research has studied opinions formed by people, who have no pressing need to form them, about people they have little contact with, and will never meet again outside the laboratory." (p.123). We may add to this quote: and in conditions, and with information and its significance, manipulated by the experimenter for subjects who know perfectly well they are subjects in an experiment but whose construction of the particular situation they are in for the data they offer is not usually taken into account.

Nevertheless, experimental work on 'implicit personality'

theories is based on our common sense knowledge that people do go beyond the data of a person's overt behaviour, making sense of that behaviour in terms of inferences about psychological features of another person. As Hays (1958) suggests:

"It seems reasonable to suppose that an individual makes his inferential judgements of a person in some fairly characteristic way. That is, a person must have some relatively stable scheme of expectations and anticipations about others, which is gradually built up through direct and vicarious experience. The scheme may be thought of as a set of inferential relationships among experienced attributes and traits which exist for an individual." (p. 289)

When somebody defines another as significant in his complex problem because he believes that the other may be opposed to his efforts, he is utilizing a set of theories about the other with which to make inferences and predict. In the next two chapters I shall go on to explore in more detail the cognition of theorizing and 'modelling' their problem-significant others by these people who did have 'a pressing need' to do so. I shall not suggest that they, or others, do not have a "relatively stable scheme of expectations and anticipations" which they drew upon in an attempt to explain and predict the attitudes and actions of problem-significant others. Quite the reverse.

However, in this chapter, I wish to illustrate that aspect of theorizing about others which most work on 'person-perception' has paid scant attention to, that it is contextual. Robert and Janet selectively paid attention to those particular aspects of significant others which they regarded as important and useful to learn about and understand in their particular situation. It is for this reason that I have used the term

'modelling others', for it connotes a selective, primarily purposeful, nature of thinking about others in the context of problem solving and policy analysis. I shall explore the considerable relevance of the ideas of Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955) to theorizing, and operationalizing theory, about the cognition of modelling others in this context. This is not merely because it suggests that individuals make sense of their world through developing and using a system of bi-polar constructs. It is also because it offers a model of man 'the scientist', whose "ultimate aim is to predict and control.", in ways that have significant implications for the approach a consultant might take to working with policy-makers on their thinking about their problem-significant others.

#### A SELECTIVE GOAL-ORIENTED FRAMEWORK

One of the reasons why, soon after the beginning of this project, it became clear that it would be highly suitable for the topic of my research, was that Robert and Janet's 'problem-reality' was one in which people were a central feature. It has been argued that this is likely to be typical to many complex policy problems belonging to decision-makers in organizations who wish to influence events in those organizations. What was, however, probably less typical was the eagerness with which Robert and Janet wanted to talk about their problem-significant others. Amidst the many descriptions they gave of their meetings and relationships with those others, one sub-set of ideas emerged again and again, revealing what it was that they consistently paid attention to in others, what it was they saw as significant in the others' attitudes and actions, and thus what it was that they were consistently interested in learning about others.

Thus, for example, the two themes which emerged consistently in their descriptions of those whom they had met for the first time were: the other's attitude to them, whether he "liked us" or "was dubious about us", "listened" or "lectured"; and secondly the other's interest in their problem, whether "he understood", or "did not see the problem", had "empathy" or "no empathy". These two sets of ideas were also, as I described in the last chapter, significantly related in their system of theories for thinking about problem-significant others. For someone who "listens" was invariably described as also someone who "likes us", while someone who "lectures us" was also invariably someone who was "dubious about us". Someone who liked them was then someone who "has empathy", who "understands", while someone who was "dubious about us" was usually someone who "does not see the problem", has "no empathy".

These linked questions and concerns were also part of the salient explanatory, interpretive framework for thinking about their problem-significant others, for what they were doing when they were coming to these conclusions about others was making inferences from the data of what a particular person did or said in a particular situation to assume about "events that are inside a person and are strictly psychological" (Taguiri, 1969, p. 396). They 'read' the behaviour of others. They were continually on the alert for indications, such as "they are always criticising us", "they are laughing at us", or such as "he always asks us what we think", or "he always gives us a straight answer", and so on, which would allow them to conclude that the others were either "dubious about us" or "like us".

There were other ideas that consistently emerged in their descriptions and evaluations of others. In chapter five I talked of the crucial importance to them of another's perceived power to help them or hinder them in their various ways, those who were described as having "little power" or as "just pawns" were often also characterized as being "easily led" rather than having "minds of their own", and the 'independence' or otherwise of others in particular relationships was also a recurring feature of their explanations for outcomes in power relationships. When they came to think about whom they wanted on the committee to run an independent training workshop as a charity, it was important to them that the members of such a committee should "have minds of their own" rather than being susceptible to the influence of others who might be against them.

For both Robert and Janet another consistent dimension for thinking about and evaluating others was their perceived intelligence, also often linked to the idea of the other "having a mind of his own". So it was that they wanted on their new committee people who were "intelligent", or having "common sense", dismissing, for example, one possible candidate who had indicated his own interest in joining the group as, "we don't want him, he always makes a mess of things." (Janet). When others behaved in ways they disapproved of, they often explained this as because the other was foolish or "stupid" or "lacking in common sense". In the first voluntary group, one of Robert and Janet's many complaints about the group was the way in which we do all this work and they say they are doing things, but they are not really doing anything".(Robert). Whether or not a person with whom

or were considering becoming, involved with was somebody who "pushes things on" rather than being "just there" was of considerable interest to them. One of their indicators for whether or not a person really had "empathy" or not, was that he was prepared to "really work". Thus for example, they characterized one person as follows: "He is sincere, he really works" (Robert). Another's readiness to offer active help was also often linked to another dimension for thinking thinking about others, his reliability. Thus, for example, Janet asserted of one person, "we can count on him, when he says he will do something, he always does it." When they came to consider whom they wanted on their new committee, once again they wanted people whom "we can count on" rather than not.

It seems unsurprising that Robert and Janet should have been consistently interested in whether or not somebody else shared their values about unemployed kids, and that they should have paid attention to such features of others with whom they became involved as their readiness to offer practical help, their intelligence, their power of various kinds, their independence of the influence of others who might be against them, and their reliability. However, the recognizability of these dimensions for thinking about others does not diminish the crucial point that they were bringing to bear a selective, goal-oriented framework upon others, in terms of their likelihood of facilitating or hindering the attainment of their objectives. It is a view of interaction that is typically taken within symbolic interactionism, where "from the individual's perspective interaction is the procedure for pursuing his or her goals in the social context." (Lauer and Handel, 1977, p.98)

Jones and Thibaut also point out that:

"If we can successfully identify the goals for which an actor is striving in the interaction situation, we can begin to say something about the cues to which he will attend, and the meaning he is most likely to assign them ... In studying the inference process in social perception ... questions of attention, selective perception, deliberate decisions of relevance, etc., enter the picture. The perceiver does not passively assign equal priority to incoming cues but actively seeks out information which is relevant to his purposes in the situation of interaction. The perceiver is tuned or set to process certain kinds of information but not others." (pp. 152-153, my emphasis.)

However, the notion of 'successfully identifying' the individual's 'goals' which he brings to bear in attempting to understand, 'predict and control' others in his complex problem seems crucial. The consultant, for example, who has only learnt about his client's problems in highly legitimated, apolitical, objectivated, terms, under the rubric of 'organizational goals', is unlikely to understand some of the most crucial bases of the client's selective inference processes with respect to his client's problem-significant others, (including not learning about who some of these are). The consultant who does not attend to an attempt to learn about the potentially complex interlinking of goals and values in a person's value system may be aware of some of his client's goal-oriented thinking about significant actors, but importantly miss others; such as, for example, in this case the significance of Robert and Janet's self-values in what they paid attention to in others..As Schutz (1970) asserts:

'It is our interest at hand that motivates all our thinking, projecting, acting, and therewith establishes the problems to be solved by our thought and the goals to be obtained by our actions. In other words, it is our interest that breaks assunder the unproblematic field of the pre-known into various zones of various relevance with respect to such interest, each of them requiring a different degree of precision of knowledge

... There is, however, no such thing as an isolated interest at hand. A single interest at hand is just an element within a hierarchical system, or even a plurality of systems, of interests which in everyday life recall our plan - plans for work and thought, for the hour and for our life.' (pp. 111-113, my emphasis)

Furthermore, understanding a person's processes of selective perception and inference in thinking about others in a particular context is not met simply by understanding the salient parts of his value system. It also requires attention to the person's theories about what aspects of another are indeed relevant in terms of significant ramifications for values, what inferences can be drawn from the behaviour of others about these relevant aspects, and how these characteristics relate to one another as a basis for explanation and prediction. In other words, such understanding requires paying attention to the network of contextually relevant beliefs and values that a person brings to bear in learning about, giving meaning to, and predicting other's attitudes and actions in his problem situation. I have touched on some of the inferential relationships for Robert and Janet, and I shall return to this topic later. First, however, I wish to set it within another aspect of the cognition of modelling others that importantly involves processes of comparison and differentiation.

#### CONSTRUING OTHERS: THE RELEVANCE OF PERSONAL CONSTRUCT THEORY

##### (i) Contrast and Similarity

Bruner, Goodnow and Austin (1956) argue that perception always involves a process of categorisation. The meaning of what is perceived comes from the category in which it is placed and from the way it is distinguished from others.



Sherif and Sherif (1969) assert that "all judgements are relational affairs...A person cannot render a judgement unless he compares two or more objects." (p.423) Specifically in relation to thinking about others, Social Comparison Theory has been concerned with exploring how "...people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison with the opinions and abilities of others." (Festinger, 1954, p. 118). Hays (1958) proposes that:

"We, as observers, are eternally in the process of comparing individuals and judging their similarity to other individuals with respect both to their physical and behavioral attributes. "John Jones reminds me of Bill Smith", "Henry is his mother made over", "Mary and her husband could hardly be more different", are frequent features of our conversational life." (p.289)

The idea that processes of comparison and differentiation are significant to the psychology of a person's understanding of his world is relatively common in psychological theory. However, it is Kelly (1955) in his Theory of Personal Constructs who systematically sets out a psychological theory and phenomenological model of man in which such processes, of 'construing', are a corner stone.

"By construing, we mean "placing an interpretation": a person places an interpretation upon what is construed. He erects a structure, within the framework of which the substance takes shape or assumes meaning. The substance which he construes does not produce the structure; the person does...

In construing, the person notes features in a series of elements which characterize some of the elements and are particularly uncharacteristic of others. Thus he erects constructs of similarity and contrast. Both the similarity and the contrast are inherent in the same construct. A construct which implied similarity without contrast would represent just as much of a chaotic undifferentiated homogeneity as a construct which implied contrast without similarity would represent a chaotic particularized heterogeneity. The former would leave the person engulfed in a sea with no landmarks to relieve the monotony; the latter would confront him with an interminable series of kaleidoscopic changes in which nothing would ever appear familiar." (pp. 50-51)

The ideas of Personal Construct Theory provided a crucial theoretical underpinning to the development of cognitive mapping as a modelling technique paying attention to a person's system of interrelated bi-polar constructs for making sense of and theorizing about his world. It is not surprising, therefore, that Personal Construct Theory should be an important part of the 'conceptual spectacles' I took with me into this research. Indeed, on two occasions during the year of the project, we also used Kelly's repertory grid technique for helping Robert and Janet explicitly attend to and analyse their construing of problem-significant others (see page 7.11 for a description of the method and a list of the constructs elicited).

However, it was not necessary to elicit constructs in this formal way to continually 'hear' processes of comparison and differentiation as a fundamental aspect of Robert and Janet's thinking about others, with, for example, the constructs elicited through the repertory grid technique appearing as part of their everyday descriptions of others both before and after they were used. The following are just a few examples of the kinds of statements they made containing constructs (shown separately) about others.

'Everybody is so hush-hush. We don't know who is sincere and who is false.' (Janet: sincere ... false)

'He is helping morally, he is not in for politics or money.' (Janet: helping morally ... in for politics or money).

'Mr. P... has the power to make, but Reverend C... has the power to make or break.' (Janet: the power to make ... the power to make or break).

Constructs derived from two repertory grids:

1:

Close to us.....	Involved in(the local authority)
Push things on.....	just there
Independent.....	Employees(of the local authority)
Have empathy.....	No empathy
We like.....	False
Interested.....	Just a representative
Listen.....	Lectures
We trust.....	don't trust
Likes us.....	dubious about us
Free agents.....	leant upon
Minds of their ownr.....	easily led
Has power .....	pawns
Respect power.....	official post power
Respected.....	insincere

2:

Have done a lot.....	has done little for us
Will help.....	won't help
Can count on.....	cannot count on
Intelligent.....	makes a mess of things
Will stir.....	won't stir
Help get money.....	no help with money
Help get publicity.....	no contacts
Constructive.....	dangerous
Power to make.....	power to make or break
People we want.....	people we don't want
Wait to be asked.....	want to be on committee

The constructs are derived from random triading of three of the elements in the grid-in this case key others-and asking the question "In what important way are two of these similar and different from the third?". Each of the elements is then seperately rated on the constructs, either at the extremes of the two poles, or as in this case, along a five or ten point scale seperating the two poles. The first repertory grid was constructed about three months after the beginning of the project when Robert and Janet were feeling particularly anxious and confused about the politics of their relationships-about "who is sincere and who is false"-and needed to think explicitly about their potential allies and opponents. The second repertory grid was constructed about six months later when Robert and Janet wanted to think about whom they wished to have on a committee to run the training workshop as a charity. The difference in the constructs elicited in the two grids reflects the different foci of interest, although it is worth noting that in the discussion around the second grid most of those which had occurred in the first appeared again in decisions about where a person should be placed on the construct dimensions.

'Oh no, we don't want him. We want people who are intelligent. He just makes a mess of things.'

(Janet: intelligent ... make a mess of things)

'He chaired the meeting, but he did not listen.

White people, professionals, should do more listening instead of formulating.' (Robert: listening ... formulating)

'He has changed. When before he would see my argument, now he no longer sees my unit of thought as constructive.' (Robert: see my argument ... no longer sees my unit of thought as constructive)

Before this I had believed he was 100% with us but now I am not so sure. He blows hot and cold" .. (Robert: 100% with us...blows hot and cold)

'He always says he is doing something but really is just good at making promises.' (Robert: doing something ... just good at making promises)

The content of Robert and Janet's selective framework for construing others discussed in the previous section can now be set out as a set of constructs which they used to differentiate between others:

- i) Those which expressed whether or not the other was sincerely concerned about the kids.

Has empathy .....	no empathy
he understands .....	he does not see the problem
interested .....	just a representative
in for recognition .....	not in for recognition
doing it from deep down..	doing it for himself
sincere .....	false
really cares .....	is not really interested
	in the kids
really cares .....	is a feather in his cap
helping morally .....	in for politics or money

- ii) Those which expressed the others' support or rejection of them.

Likes us .....	dubious about us
listens .....	lectures
listens .....	formulates
sees my argument .....	does not see my unit of thought as constructive
makes sense out of my nonsense .....	no longer thinking on the same levels as I
has the confidence in me .....	does not have the confidence in me
takes us seriously .....	does not take us seriously
with us all the way .....	always criticising us
constructive .....	dangerous
100% with us .....	blows hot and cold
) .....	sitting on the fence
) .....	trying to nullify what we are doing
) .....	trying to combat us
) .....	trying to get rid of us
with us all the way.....	working against us

- iii) Those which described the others reliability.

can count on .....	cannot count on
constructive .....	not helping
will not stir: .....	will stir

- iv) Those which described the others competence or intelligence.

intelligent .....	makes a mess of things
sensible.....	foolish
<b>sensible</b> .....	stupid
has common sense .....	lacking common sense
experienced .....	inexperienced
learned .....	has no qualifications
clever .....	has no qualifications
has the flow of words ..	doesn't have the flow of words
bright.....	foolish
understands the hierarchy .....	cannot talk to the hierarchy

- v) Those which characterized the others readiness to offer substantial practical assistance.

pushes things on.....	just there
has done a lot .....	has done little for us
will help.....	won't help
really works .....	not doing much
doing something .....	'just good at making promises

- vi) Those which described the others independence, either in terms of freedom from outside pressure or 'independence of mind'.

minds of their own .....	easily led
strong in mind .....	weak in mind
free agents.....	leant upon
not under pressure.....	under pressure

(vii) Those which summarized their own attitudes to the others.

we trust.....don't trust  
we like.....false

(viii) Those which described the others general 'standing'.

respected ..... insincere  
liked ..... not liked

(ix) Those which described the others' power.

respect power ..... official post power  
has power..... pawns  
power to make ..... power to make or break  
powerful..... little power

Thus Personal Construct Theory 'earned its living' as reflecting the way in which Robert and Janet did construe others in ways that have important implications for practice.

A person who is attuned to construing as a psychological process becomes sensitive and receptive to what he is learning about the particular, and often individual, meaning that a person is giving to another person's attitude and actions, not in terms of some logical opposite, but a psychological opposite. Thus, for example, for Janet the meaning of "helping morally" was elaborated through its psychological opposite of "in for politics or money". For Robert the meaning of "he sees my argument" was elaborated through the psychological alternative of "no longer sees my unit of thought as constructive". For both of them the meaning of 'listening' was elaborated through the psychological opposite of "lecturing". As Kelly (1955) argues:

"Consider a person's use of the construct of respect vs. contempt. ... when we approach his thinking from the standpoint of the psychology of personal constructs, we do not lump together what he excludes as irrelevant with what he excludes as contrasting. We see the construct as composed essentially of a similarity-contrast dimension which he strikes through a part of his field of experience. We need to look at both ends of it if we want to know what it means to

him. We cannot understand him well if we look only at the similarity - "respect" - end of the dimension. We cannot understand what he means by "respect" unless we know what he sees as relevantly opposed to "respect". (pp 70-71)

Since constructs about others come from processes of differentiation and grouping, we are also offered a framework for approaching and understanding of the categorization by a decision-maker of his problem-significant others.

Thus, for example, the meaning of the category 'those who are one hundred per cent with us' is not unrelated to, but elaborated by, its alternative pole, 'those who are trying to nullify what we are doing'; just as the further meaning of these categories in terms of their content was elaborated by the way in which each represented a psychological opposite of the other:

<u>100% with us</u> .....	<u>trying to nullify what we are doing</u>
we trust .....	don't trust
we like .....	don't like
constructive .....	dangerous
likes us .....	is dubious about us
listens .....	lectures
takes us seriously .....	does not take us seriously
sees my argument .....	does not see my unit of thought seriously
has empathy .....	no empathy
helping morally .....	in for politics or money
constructive .....	dangerous
can count on .....	cannot count on
intelligent .....	makes a mess of things
really works .....	not doing much
strong in mind .....	weak in mind
respected .....	insincere

A similar point can be made, with relevance to the content of the last chapter, about learning about processes of "...the self-sense..discovered..in the course of vigorous effort, especially when that effort brings the individual into rivalry with other persons," (Turner, 1968, p.99).

Personal Construct Theory suggests that we do not have concepts of self but constructs of 'like self - unlike self'. It became clear, as Robert and Janet talked about others, in ways that did frequently involve some explicit comparison with themselves, the ways of construing others described earlier were often in relation to themselves. Thus they described themselves as having a genuine concern for the kids, as not being interested in personal gain in contrast to the many others they had to deal with: "When I compare myself with him, I am doing it from deep down, while he is doing it for himself" (Robert). "We are helping morally, we are not in for politics or money like him" (Janet). Both of them frequently referred to themselves as "having empathy" in contrast to those with "no empathy".

They also saw themselves as hard-working and energetic in contrast to others: "We really work but these people are all the time saying that they are doing things for us, but they are not doing much at all" (Robert); "I think he likes us because he is impressed by people who push things on and he knows that some of them are just there" (Janet). They described themselves as being, in contrast to the 'pawns', independently minded and although Robert lacked confidence in his 'cleverness' both of them regarded themselves as "sensible" rather than "foolish". "The point is that they listen to P.. because they are easily led. We can see through him because we have minds of our own" (Janet); "When I compare myself with him, I am not bright but I am not foolish. And I am not weak in mind like he is" (Robert). In these ways Robert and Janet's self-other constructions



reflected the following:

"When the person begins to use himself as a datum in forming constructs, exciting things begin to happen. He finds that the constructs he forms operate as rigorous controls upon his behavior. His behavior in relation to other people is particularly affected. Perhaps it would be better to say that his behavior in comparison with other people is particularly affected. It is, of course, the comparison he sees or construes which affects his behavior. Thus, much of his social life is controlled by the comparisons he has come to see between himself and others." (Kelly, 1955, p. 131)

(ii) An Explanatory and Predictive Network

In terms of the network of theories that make up a person's implicit personality theory, to see this is as a system of constructs is to see that we can learn about the inferences a person makes from one characteristic or attribute of a person to another attribute as involving a choice about what a person is not in the inferential relationship.

"The two-ended construct provides a person with a dichotomous choice, whether it be a choice in how he will perceive something or a choice in how he will act. One may say, therefore, that the system of constructs which one establishes for himself represents the network of pathways along which he is free to move. Each pathway is a two-way street; he can move either up or down the street, but he cannot strike across country without building new conceptual routes to follow." (ibid, p. 128).

Kelly is here underlining how important it is to pay attention to a person's system of constructs rather than each construct in isolation, for "... not only are the constructs personal, but the hierarchical system into which they are arranged is personal too. It is this systematic arrangement which characterises the personality, even more than do the differences between individual constructs." (p. 56). Thus, for example, in using cognitive mapping

in teams we have attempted to encourage the members of a team to explore and make explicit the theories which underlie their 'surface' agreements and have merged in maps belonging to individuals to produce an 'aggregated' team map with caution; e.g.

"For example, in one case, several members of the editorial team of a magazine told us some of their beliefs about "regular readers". When it came to putting together a model for the team we might have merged these into one concept if we had not happened to notice that the context around them suggested that the different team members might have different meanings for the words. In the next team meeting we checked this impression, and found that it was in fact the case; one person meant by 'regular' those readers who bought the magazine every week and had an order for it at a newsagent. Another person meant those who bought it almost every week if there was one left when they remembered, and who probably ended up buying three a month, while another person turned out to mean those who read the magazine at least once a month. These people had been talking about regular readers as if they all meant the same thing for years. It was only the context of their concepts, seen in maps, which finally revealed the misunderstanding." (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1982, p. 7.9)

One way of exploring the relationship between constructs has been suggested by Bannister (1963) as follows:

"Suppose we ask someone to nominate 40 individuals personally known to himself, and then categorize each of them in turn as either moral or immoral. Let us then ask him to categorize them all once more as either honest or dishonest. If we were to observe that 18 out of 20 people judged by him to be "moral" were also designated as "honest", and all but 3 of those stated were 'immoral' were also referred to as 'dishonest', then we would probably be safe in inferring that there was a positive relationship between these two constructs in his own system. We could always fall back on a X<sup>2</sup> test in estimating the probability that our inference was in error. The degree of statistical association between the two distributions of judgements when both constructs are applied to the same set of figures is presumed to reflect the extent to which these two constructs are psychologically related for the particular individual who is doing the sorting." (p. 378)

Hinkle(1965) devised the implications grid to specifically

explore a personal network of construct implications. Having elicited twenty constructs from a person considering himself and a number of significant others, Hinkle presented each construct to the subject and asked him, on which of the other constructs would a change also be necessary if he were suddenly to find himself at the opposite pole to that on which he was currently placed.

Apart from the fact that it seems problematic to ask a person to differentiate between others on constructs which he may not actually use in his inter personal construing, there was no attempt in this research to develop precise statistical measures of relationships between constructs in the way suggested by Bannister. Nor were any implications grids constructed. However, it was possible to develop qualitatively a similar idea of relationships between constructs by exploring the way in which they were used in describing and modelling others over time. Thus, for example, I learned that most people who were described as "respected rather than insincere" were also characterized as "intelligent" rather than "makes a mess of things" by Janet and "sensible" rather than foolish" by Robert. Thus there was a relationship between these two sets of constructs. I also learned the meaning of 'has empathy rather than no empathy' in terms of its relationship with other constructs through statements such as "oh yes, he has empathy. He is helping morally, he's not in for politics or money" by Janet, or "that man has empathy. He is 100% sincere", by Robert. Crude models of the relationships that appeared to exist between the constructs listed earlier are shown on pages 7.22-23.

Kelly argues that a person renders the complexity of his construct system manageable through organizing it hierarchically in ordinal relationships of inclusion or subsuming.

"One construct may subsume another as one of its elements. It may do this in either of two ways: it may extend the cleavage intended by the other or it may abstract across the other's cleavage line. For example, the construct good vs. bad may subsume, respectively, among other things, the two ends of the intelligent-stupid dimension. In this sense, "good" would include all "intelligent" things plus some things which fall outside the range of convenience of the intelligent vs. stupid construct ...

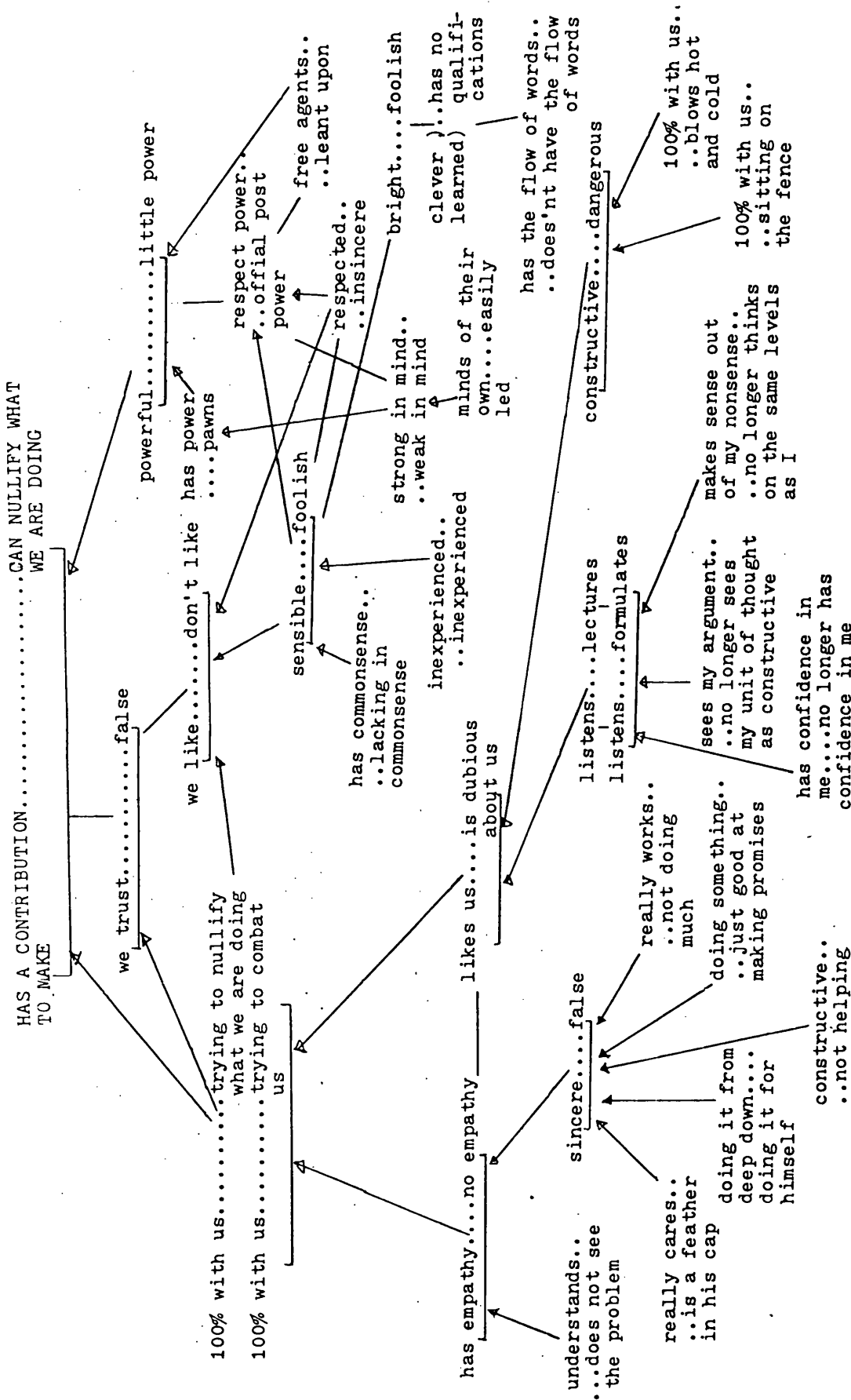
An example of abstracting across the intelligent vs. stupid cleavage line would be the construct of evaluative vs. descriptive. In this case the intelligent vs. stupid construct would be subsumed as a dimension. The construct would itself be identified as an "evaluative" construct and would be contrasted with other constructs such as light vs. dark, which might be considered "descriptive" only ...

When one construct subsumes another its ordinal relationship may be termed subordinal and the ordinal relationship of the other becomes subordinal. Moreover, the ordinal relationship between the constructs may reverse itself from time to time ... Thus man systemizes his constructs by concretely arranging them in hierarchies and by abstracting them further. But whether he pyramids his ideas or penetrates them with insights, he builds a system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs for his personal convenience in anticipating events."(pp.57-58)

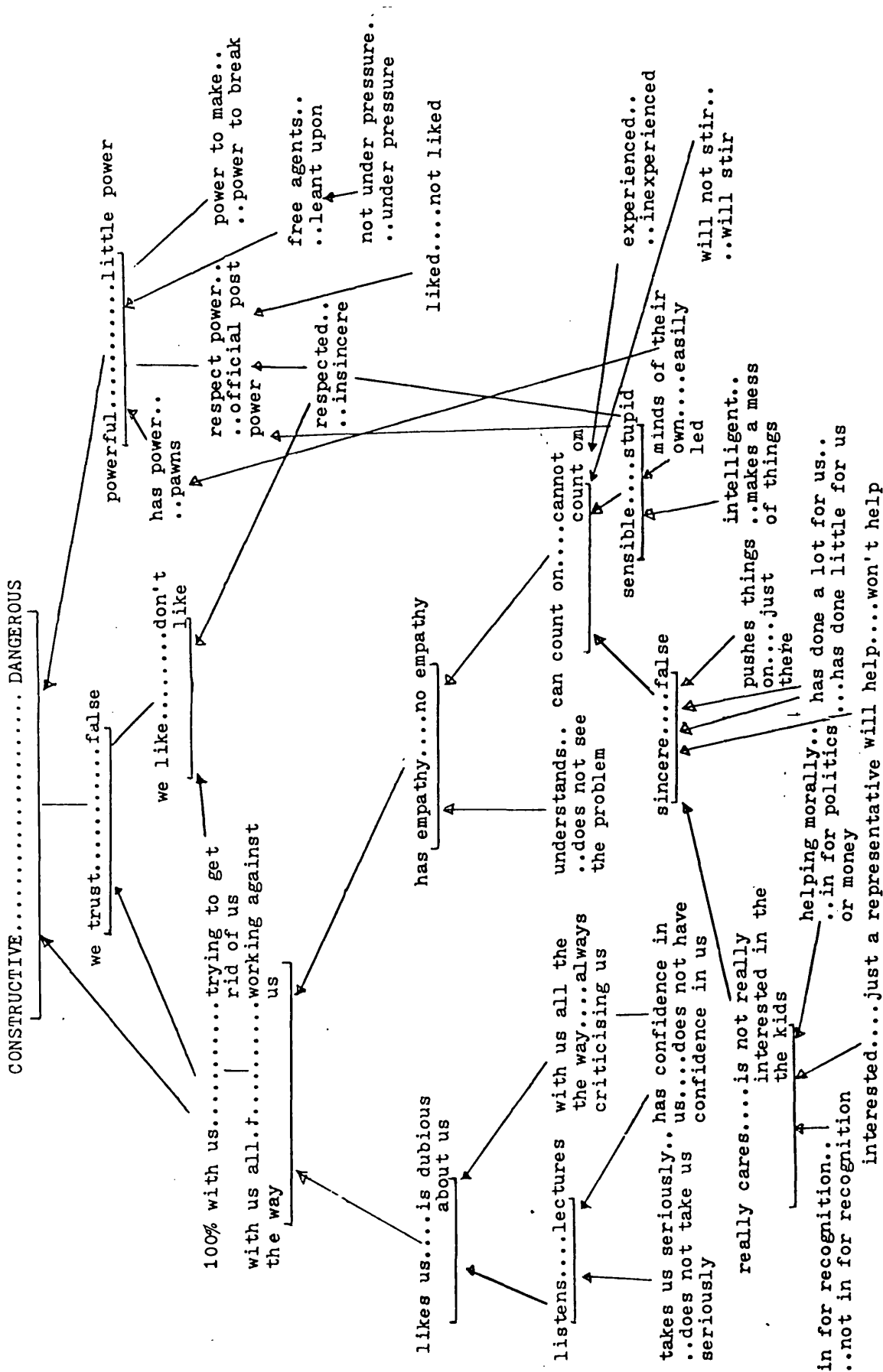
In constructing the models I have where possible tried to represent the hierarchical systems, in these terms, and my understanding of the meaning of their constructs in terms of inclusion and subsuming in this way also reflected relationships of explanation and prediction or inference. Thus, for example, the meaning of the constructs "100% with us.... trying to nullify what we are doing" and "100% with us ... trying to get rid of us" was in terms of their subsuming for both Robert and Janet the constructs "has empathy ... no empathy" and "likes us ... is dubious about us". These

latter constructs would also represent part of the answers to the question "Why do you see this person as 100% with you rather than trying to nullify what you are doing?" or "If you know this person has empathy and likes you, what could that lead you to infer about him in terms of his attitude to your problem?"

However, it seems important to note here again that the concept of hierarchy, centring around a notion of different levels, is not straightforward. In Chapter Three I described how we have suggested (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979; also Armstrong, 1979) that there may be various ways of approaching the modelling of a hierarchical value system, not all of which may be consistent with one another and will require choices about which is most suitable in a particular context. Thus value A may be superordinate to value B according to whether more attention is directed to defending a threat towards A rather than B; A is set within a longer time period than B; A is more ambiguous; generally applicable; has a greater range of convenience than B; or subsumes B definitionally. Thus for example, in the model of Robert's system of constructs, another way of representing the hierarchy would be to suggest that "likes us ... is dubious about us" and the constructs subsumed by it, was often, if not always, the most important aspect of others he was interested in, one that he certainly devoted enormous cognitive energy to 'defending a threat' against. Another complication is that the structure of a hierarchical system of constructs is probably not static for it may be more helpful to



A model of the hierarchical system of key constructs belonging to Robert, subsumed beneath the central dimension for construing and differentiating between others as those who might help or hinder the attainment of problem-objectives. Arrows indicate expository/predictive relationships; straight lines connect 'connotatively' constructs often associated in use.



A similar model of key constructs belonging to Janet.

consider that the construct "likes us ... is dubious about us" became the most important when the value it was related to was threatened. To recall Kelly again "the ordinal relationship between the constructs may reverse itself from time to time", and this may be worth pursuing in terms of the development of techniques for modelling a person's theories about others.

Secondly the models just shown are crude in part because not only do they not indicate the strength of inferential relationships but also because they are considerable simplifications, not including a great deal of Robert and Janets theories about others. Thus, for example, in the models there are some constructs that do not have "parallel" relationships (c.f. Hinkle, 1965, referring to a relationship between constructs A-B and X-Y where pole A implies pole X and pole B implies pole Y). Somebody who was "powerful" could be either somebody who "has a contribution to make" or nullify what we are doing" while somebody who has "little power" was unlikely to be able to "nullify what we are doing". Somebody who had "official post power" was not necessarily "foolish" in the relationship between the constructs "sensible .... foolish" and "respect power .... official post power". Hinkle would describe these as orthogonal relationships and he suggest two other common construct pole relationships: reciprocal, where A and X and B and Y imply each other; and ambiguous, where, for example both A and B imply X and B also implies Y, or A implies both X and Y and B implies both X and Y. A way of representing these different kinds of relationships without causing visual confusion in a complex model may also be worth pursuing. However, to return to the question of simplification of theorizing about others, many of the



relationships between poles that are not straightforward become clearer when set within their context of a network of other beliefs about specific individuals or groups, which I have not shown in my modelling of certain key recurring constructs. Thus, for example, somebody could be "in for recognition" and still be "sincere" if he had demonstrated his personal commitment to Robert and Janet; a person could also be "sincere" and "not doing much" if there was a belief that he "would help us if he could but he is a very busy man and he can't". What this suggests, fairly obviously, is that models of constructs and their relationships which appear to be consistently important dimensions for construing others, or have been elicited by a repertory grid, should be treated with some caution, as a basis for discussion and elaboration, rather than some 'complete' representation; which is not to say that they cannot be helpful for this purpose.

#### DECISION-MAKERS AS SCIENTISTS

More generally, Personal Construct Theory also offers a model of man which has some significance as a perspective for understanding a person's construing of his world and others, in the context of problem-solving and policy analysis. Kelly argues that "every man is, in his own particular way, a scientist", whose "ultimate aim is to predict and control". (p. 5)

"Like the prototype of the scientist that he is, man seeks prediction. His structured network of pathways leads towards the future so that he may anticipate it. This is the function it serves. Anticipation is both the push and pull of the psychology of personal constructs ... Anticipation is not merely carried out for its own sake; it is carried on so that future reality may be better represented. It is the future which tantalizes man, not the past. Always he reaches out to the future through the window of the present."  
(p. 49)

Kelly's 'man-the-scientist' can be, and indeed has been, seen

as perhaps an inaccurately optimistic model of man-enquiring, continually testing the validity of his hypotheses about the world. Thus, for example, Tyler (1981) suggests that "...we are not always so intellectually energetic" (p.31) as Kelly implies. (see also Hinkle, 1970, Holland, 1970). Schutz (1970) appears to offer a somewhat different picture:

"... the knowledge of the man who acts and thinks within the world of his daily life is not homogenous; it is (1) incoherent, (2) only partially clear, and (3) not at all free from contradictions ... Man in his daily life is only partially - and dare we say exceptionally - interested in the clarity of his knowledge, i.e., in full insight into the relations between the elements of his world and the general principles ruling these relations ... Furthermore, he does not search for the truth and does not quest for certainty. All he wants is information on likelihood and insight into the chances or risks which the situation at hand entails for the outcomes of his actions." (pp. 75 - 76).

Schutz' ideas seem to make sense. Our knowledge of our world does seem to be often 'incoherent ... only partially clear ... not at all free from contradictions.' We are not, or most of us are not, continually enquiring and curious for 'full insight into the relations between the elements' of our world. As writers of strategic planning frequently remind us, the problems and 'fire-fighting' of to-day or the immediate future, often lead us to forget that there may be some far more significant crises looming on the longer-term horizon which indeed may be caused, or exacerbated, by the actions we take to meet the crises of to-day. Our capacity to misunderstand or 'stereotype' others in ways that seem to be 'blind' is often considerable.

However, although Kelly's approach to the notion of prediction is somewhat confusing since he uses the term for both anticipatory hypothesizing, subject, open-endedly,

to the test of experience (in a way akin to traditional science) and also for self-fulfilling prophecies, (see e.g. the discussion by Mischel, 1964, and Fraser Reid, 1979) it is clear that he does see man often acting in the way Schutz describes. For a crucial element in his model is the notion of control, and in exactly the same way as futures and long-range forecasting, man can find many ways to predict and control, e.g.:

"A man construes his neighbor's behavior as hostile. By that he means that his neighbor, given the proper opportunity, will do him harm. He tries out his construction of his neighbor's attitude by throwing rocks at his neighbor's dog. His neighbor responds with an angry rebuke. The man may then believe that he has validated his construction of his neighbor as a hostile person.

The man's construction of his neighbor as a hostile person may appear to be 'validated' by another kind of fallacy. The man reasons "If my neighbor is hostile, he will be eager to know when I get into trouble, when I am ill, or when I am in any way vulnerable. I will watch to see if this isn't so. The next morning the man meets his neighbor and is greeted with the conventional "How are you?" Sure enough, the neighbor is doing just what was predicted of a hostile person!" (Kelly, 1955, p.13)

Robert and Janet were continually concerned with learning about others in ways that would enable them to understand them, and in turn better 'predict and control' them. They asked themselves, for example, drawing upon their knowledge particular individuals and 'types' to ask who would have "empathy" They began to think carefully about the meaning and significance of power and power relationships between people so that they could better predict the implications of any outcomes of such relationships for their objectives. When they found themselves confronted with what they saw as opposition in their group, they wanted to understand why

the others appeared to be against them. They wanted to understand others' reasons and motives for acting in particular ways, and were not satisfied until they had found answers which they could regard as enabling them to predict and then pre-empt the others' future actions and attitudes in relation to their problem. When they felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the 'people' aspect of their problem, they asked us for ways of helping them think about and 'sort out' this complexity, in order to make it manageable. Thus, although we in our role as consultants may have helped them be more explicit, questioning and reflective scientists than they might otherwise have been, we did so within the context of their defined problem-reality and the very acceptability of these efforts of ours lay in their strong and continuing desire to be scientists whose ultimate aim was to "predict and control".

When someone is attempting to handle a complex problem, this seems to be a context in which above all that person is in the business of at least attempting to make sense of his world so that he may better predict and control it. And to see a person facing a complex problem in this way is to suggest that it is worth treating his theories about his problem-reality with some care, for if many of them have worked well for him, "if we try to ignore or override his reality, he will almost certainly ignore us". (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p. 56). Kelly argued of psychologists, who claim to be scientists, that:

"... curiously enough, psychologists rarely credit the human subjects in their experiments with having similar aspirations. It is as though the psychologist

were saying to himself, "I, being a psychologist, and therefore a scientist, am performing this experiment in order to improve the prediction and control of certain human phenomena; but my subject, being merely a human organism, is obviously propelled by inexorable drives welling up within him, or else he is in gluttonous pursuit of sustenance and shelter."

Now what would happen if we were to re-open the question of human motivation and use our long-range view of man to infer just what it is that sets the course of his endeavour? ... Might not the individual man, each in his own personal way, assume more of the stature of a scientist, ever seeking to predict and control the course of events with which he is involved? Would he not have his theories, test his hypotheses, and weigh his experimental evidence? And, if so, might not the differences between the personal viewpoints of different men correspond to the differences between the theoretical points of view of different scientists?" (p. 5)

If we substitute 'consultant' for 'psychologist', 'expert' for 'scientist', 'client' for 'subject', 'consultancy' for 'performing the experiment' and 'irrational' for 'drives' and 'appetites', it is not too difficult to see the relevance of this quote for the situation of those of us who offer help and techniques for individuals attempting to tackle their complex policy problems. It is a perspective which has been central to the approach to the client - consultant relationship which has been described and argued for at several points in the thesis and I shall return to this theme again.

### RECONSTRUCTING OTHERS

First, however, in this final section I shall discuss the way in which Personal Construct Theory also enables us to theoretically understand more of the process described in the last chapter by which Robert and Janet came to reconstruct some who had been "100% with us" to

their polar opposites "those who are trying to nullify what we are doing" or "those who are trying to get rid of us".

(i) A better basis for prediction, control and action

I described how for Robert in particular but also for Janet, the behaviour of others who had been their friends, and now seemed to them to be antagonistic, was disturbing, and puzzling. Thus, for example, Robert frequently made statements such as the following: "I do not understand. Why does he sit on the fence like this?"; "He is playing a love and hate game. Why is he doing this? - I do not understand " When Janet despairingly spoke of the way in which: "We do not know who we can trust ... who is sincere and who is false" or "I don't know, everything in the group is different now", she too was expressing her sense of the unmanageability and unpredictability of others. While Robert and Janet felt uncertain about whether the other was "100% with us" or "trying to nullify what we are doing" they felt unable to predict and therefore act appropriately with respect to those others.

By reconstruing others firmly from one pole to the other, accompanied frequently by assertions that the other "has changed", and building a consistent picture of the other as now on the opposite poles of the associated constructs, they now felt able once more to make sense, predict and choose appropriate actions with respect to the others. As Cochran (1977) suggests "... if conceptual organization provides a basis for understanding others, then a person

might be expected to actively attempt to maintain order among his concepts to preserve an adequate basis for understanding." (p. 320). (And no doubt if my assumptions about the dynamics of Robert and Janet's relationships are correct then their reconstruction of the other with ensuing actions on their part could have become a self-fulfilling prophecy).

In going through a process which involved anxiety, ambivalence, an attempt to understand and then, in effect, making a decision about the other, they were also undertaking a process akin to what Kelly describes as the C-P-C (Circumspection - Preemption - Control) cycle of construction:

"The C-P-C Cycle, then, starts with circumspection, which enables a person to look at his elements propositionally, or in a multi-dimensional manner. But because he cannot, to quote a classic phrase, "mount his horse and ride off in all directions", he must choose the most relevant axis along which to construe his situation. He therefore selects what he believes to be the crucial issue and temporarily - or permanently - disregards the relevancy of all the other issues that may be involved. Thus, by preemption, he sets up a choice point, a crossroads of decision ...

But the C-P-C Cycle does not end with preemption. There is still the choice to be made. Indeed, the final 'C' in our term might stand for choice as well as for control. As we have indicated before in our Choice Corollary, a person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system." (pp 516-517)

This is also salient to understanding the differences between Robert and Janet in their reconstruction processes. Robert, despite his need to understand the others' puzzling behaviour never really considered a range of possible alternative explanations for it. He was drawn,

quickly, almost inexorably, into a conclusion that the other was "trying to nullify what we are doing". Janet, in contrast, did consider others more circumspectly, or propositionally, before her more belated preemption and decision to construe the others on the opposite pole of what they had been previously. Robert showed what Kelly, and indeed our common sense use of the notion, would call "impulsivity":

"Impulsivity is a form of control, not the absence of control. The field is preempted. A choice point is established. A decision is made. Action ensues. The characteristic feature of impulsivity is that the period of circumspection which normally precedes decision is unduly shortened...He quickly narrows down the issues and makes a choice which commits him to a course of events." (p. 526)..

#### (ii) Inconsistency and Reconstructing

We can also relate the above to some of the difficulties with consistency theories which treat two or three 'cognitions' in isolation. Most theories of cognitive change point to the central role of some kind of perceived psychological inconsistency. The most well known of these is Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance Theory. This suggests that whenever a person holds two cognitions which are psychologically inconsistent, "considering these two alone, the obverse of one element follows from the other" (pp. 260-261) - he experiences a 'negative drive state' leading him to seek to resolve the inconsistency. He does so either by changing one or both cognitions so that they fit together better, or by adding 'consonant' cognitions, that, for example, if his friends continue to smoke cigarettes, then it can't be so dangerous after all.



(see also Heider's, 1958, Balance Theory involving the perceived balance or imbalance of a triad of elements in interpersonal relations).

Yet most of us seem able to tolerate much of what to another and even ourselves if we examine our thinking, would seem to be inconsistent. Thus Kelly suggests in his "Fragmentation Corollary" that "a person may successively employ a variety of construction sub systems which are inferentially incompatible with one another". (p. 83). We can tolerate inconsistency in these ways because, as Kelly points out, we do not bring to bear the whole of our construct system to construe any particular situation, but rather parts or sub-systems of it, so that any psychological inconsistencies between them often do not become salient. Furthermore, our construing of the world does not involve two cognitions in isolation, but these are set in a network of theories and expectations which may lead apparent (to an outsider) contradictions not to be such for the person. "Consistency and inconsistency are personal labels. What one person sees as inconsistent another may see as consistent". (ibid, p. 86).

Thus, for example, Aronson (1978) refers to the role of what he calls 'underlying cognitions' affecting our perception or otherwise of psychological inconsistencies.

"... we know that in most situations two cognitions are almost never taken by themselves. Occasionally, two cognitions, which in the abstract would appear to be dissonant, fail to arouse dissonance because of the existence of a "neutralizing" underlying cognition. For example, suppose I know a brilliant fellow who is married to an incredibly stupid woman. These

cognitions are inconsistent but I would contend that they do not necessarily produce dissonance ... Why? because I have a general, underlying, pervasive cognition that there are a multitude of factors which determine mate selection - similarities of intelligence being only one of them." (p. 205)

Aronson's idea of underlying cognitions is very similar to Kelly's conception of 'permeable - impermeable' constructs, those which will or will not admit to their range of convenience . new elements not yet construed within their framework.

"A construct, or an aspect of one's construction system, can be called permeable if it is so constituted that new experience and new events can be discriminatively added to those which it already embraces. A construct which "takes life in its stride" is a permeable one. It is under the regnancy of such constructs that the more subordinate aspects of one's construction system can be systematically varied without making his whole psychological house fall down on him." (p. 81)

Thus, for example, although Robert and Janet paid considerable attention to whether or not another was "really working" rather than "not doing much", and this was part of the meaning for them of those who were "100% with us" nevertheless that superordinate construct "100% with us ... trying to nullify what we are doing" was permeable enough to allow them to accept that some people could still be "100% with us" and also "not doing much". This was so long as they had a belief that the person would "help us if he could but he is a very busy man, and can't." (Janet). Similarly, although a person "in for recognition" was typically someone who wasn't "really interested in the kids", some people could still be "in for recognition" and "really care" if they demonstrated their personal commitment to Robert and Janet. In their personal network these 'inconsistencies', taken

within a network of other beliefs, were not centrally important to them. If we consider again the notion of having a better basis for prediction and control these 'inconsistencies' did not lead them to feel that they could not satisfactorily 'make sense of' and manage the others. On the other hand, for Robert and Janet, as I explained in the last chapter, the idea that somebody could "be dubious about us" and still also 100% with us" was an unacceptable incompatibility which led them to feel uncertain about how to act with respect to the other (and therefore how to control the other).

"When we hold two views which are consistent with each other we expect to choose similar, or at least compatible, courses of action under them. The two views are inconsistent if they require us to perform the impossible feat of riding off in opposite directions at the same time. They are inconsistent if they lead us to anticipate two incompatible events." (Kelly, 1955, p. 87)

### (iii) Core Constructs and Reconstructing Others

I used the term "unacceptable" above and as I suggested in the last chapter there was more to their reconstruction of others than 'simply' having a better basis for explanation, prediction, and therefore action to control. I discussed how, although they differed in the transition period of this reconstructing, nevertheless for both of them the key 'pivotal' constructs in the remodelling of others appeared to be those associated with the perceived rejection of their 'prized image of self', summarized in the construct "likes us ... is dubious about us". It was the relationship between the others' support or rejection of themselves as worthwhile, competent and significant individuals, that was the crucial incompatibility in their model of what a

person who was "100% with us" should be, and that which led to the reconstruction of the other.

If the other's antagonistic behaviour rendered him no longer understandable and therefore controllable, so that in Personal Construct Theory terms Robert and Janet experienced anxiety, where "the anxious person has found he has partially lost his structural grip on events"(Kelly,1955 p. 495); the rejecting behaviour of those who had once been their friends can also be interpreted as representing a threat: "... the awareness of imminent comprehensive change in one's core structures" (ibid, p. 489). Core constructs are "those which govern a person's maintenance processes - that is, those by which he maintains his identity and existence." (p. 482). Hinkle (1965) argues that a person resists change in superordinate constructs because these have a greater number of implicative relationships than subordinate constructs. A person seeks to avoid change which is anticipated either to lead to an imminent comprehensive reduction of the total number of predictive implications (threat) or as creating a relative absence of predictive implications (anxiety). He suggests that resistance to change on stable self-constructs can be explained in these terms.

Crockett and Meisel (1974) argue that if a person's constructs are densely inter-connected then changing one aspect of his impression of another, particularly if the construct concerned holds a central position in the pattern of relationships, should "reverberate throughout the

system, inducing changes in inferences along many other construct dimensions and resulting in an impression much different from the initial one." (p. 291). They described how more than one subject in their experiment was heard to remark "If I change this, I'll have to change practically everything," and was then observed not to change the central construct. Both the ideas above, about the potential 'reverberations' of change, and resistance to change, are applicable to Robert and Janet's reconstruction of others. In relation to the former, construing a person as "trying to nullify what we are doing" or "trying to get rid of us" resulted in a slot change in the other associated constructs which were subordinate to it and elaborated its meaning for them. It also led to a reconstruction of history:

"I thought he was my friend, but he was never really my friend at all" (Robert).

"I didn't detect this before, but I think he was linking up with us because it was one of the ways he could do what he wants to do about his politics and not about the kids at all" (Robert).

"All this time he has been making us think that he has been doing a lot for the kids, but now it is clear that he has not really been doing anything" (Robert).

"I realise now he was never really interested in the kids" (Janet).

In terms of resistance to change we can suggest that the construed rejection by others of their centrally important conceptions and values about themselves would have resulted

in such a "comprehensive" change, to their core constructs, that rather than reconstrue themselves, they chose to reconstrue the others.

In his 'Choice Corollary' Kelly argues that a person chooses for himself the pole of a construct through which he anticipates a greater possibility for extension - "making it more comprehensive, increasing its range of convenience, making more and more of life's experiences meaningful" (p. 66); or definition - "that which appears to make his system more explicit and clear cut" (p. 67) - of his construct system. In one of his few references to values, Kelly also suggests that a person's choices for construing the world come also from the values which give meaning and significance to his life.

"Not only is a person's construction system composed of dichotomous constructs, but, within the system of dichotomies, the person builds his life upon one or other of the alternatives represented in each of the dichotomies. This is to say that he places relative values upon the ends of his dichotomies. Some of the values are quite transient and represent merely the convenience of the moment. Others are quite stable and represent guiding principles." (p. 65).

Thus, we can interpret Robert and Janet's reconstrual of others (rather than a reconstruction of themselves) as a choice about how best to meet and retain these "guiding principles" incorporated in their values about their own significance and worth. As Katz (1968) argues of various cognitive consistency theories treating two or more cognitions in isolation:

"... why dispense with concepts of motivation, of value systems, and of personality predispositions as is done in balance theory if we want to understand

the nature of self-consistency... People organize their cognitions and attitudes around objects and symbols in their world and group their beliefs according to their appropriateness and relevance for various types of situation... It is clear that people have some existing organization of beliefs and value systems which not only give weighting to cognitive incongruities but also enable them to accommodate apparent inconsistencies." (pp. 186-188)

#### (iv) Significant Others as Problems

The discussion above also illustrates how thinking about problem-significant others can be related to processes of problem-construction more generally. Firstly, for example, the personal nature of the construction of inconsistencies underlines the importance of a consultant listening carefully to the framework of beliefs and values that make up a person's defined problem-reality rather than assuming that "that's illogical", "doesn't make sense", "is contradictory", in ways that may lead a client to feel his own particular wisdom and knowledge about his world and others is being peremptorily ignored.

Of course the client's network of beliefs which see some relation between events as not contradictory or inconsistent may operate for him at an unexamined intuitive level. We have commented on the sense of confusion, even paralysis, that may accompany a process of consultancy which enables a person to become more explicit and aware of inter-relationships and their ramifications in the problem-reality as he defines it (e.g. Eden, Jones, Sims and Smithin, 1981). The sense of confusion which may also accompany more explicit analysis of problem-significant others is likely to come not only from a new awareness of

complexity in terms of the sheer volume of data that has become explicit but also from the new awareness of significant incompatibilities and inconsistencies that had not previously been brought to explicit awareness.

If significant incompatibilities causing confusion and anxiety about problem-significant others are, as suggested above, significant because they have implications for values, then we can see how thinking about problem-significant others can be, or lead to, an issue for a person:

"... an issue will be related to a relatively high-order value, will include several problems which cannot necessarily be easily identified, will usually imply significant doubt and anxiety about the nature of a satisfactory outcome, and often implies the acknowledged existence of important value conflict at a level of ambiguity or generality which gives rise to confusion and complexity". (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p. 16).

Kelly's notion of a 'Circumspection - Preemption-Control' Cycle where "his effort to make the final elaborative choice throws him back upon circumspection before the cycle has run its normal course" (p. 517), also helps to theoretically explain the phenomenon of "problem-finishing" - about problems to do with significant others in an issue - by policy-makers as "men of action (who) cannot be called upon constantly to be examining themselves" (Berlin, 1978, p. 111):

"We believe that the distinction between problem construction, making sense of problems, solving problems, and implementing solutions is less than clear. We ask you to consider carefully the process of discovering how to act in your own personal problem solving. The end of this process is mostly more akin to "problem finishing" than it is to



solution. Most people can recognize the experience of feeling a sense of 'closure', a point when it seems that there is an appropriate set of things to be done. What most of us do is to "think around" a problem; we redefine it a few times, we mentally simulate some of the possible outcomes from possible courses of action, we try to make sense of the situation. We don't do this in any particular order but rather cycle around - we think. When we get to that point at which we 'finish' thinking and want to act we know that we could have gone on thinking or might even have stopped thinking earlier. However, we usually expect to have arrived at a better set of actions than we would otherwise have done." (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1982, p. 9.2)

In terms of "arriving at a better set of actions" the process of confronting significant incompatibilities may not only increase the level of anxiety felt by a policy maker about his issue; it may also be a key basis for creativity. Adams-Webber (1979) argues that it is the ambiguity of new experience which leads to change in the organization and content of a construct system.

"When a particular element does not 'fit' the pattern of construct relationships within one subsystem, an individual can employ the strategy of trying to assimilate it more consistently to another subsystem. The more differentiated the current structure of a system in terms of independently organized subsystems, the more likely that he will be able to 'fit' the given element into any one of them more or less consistently. If, on the other hand, an element remains a focus of ambiguity within the content of all existing structure, it may be necessary to develop a new substructure in order to accommodate it adequately." (p. 15)

Bannister and Mair (1968) make the point in the specific context of a person thinking about others as follows:

"... it may well be that the attempt to understand people who puzzle, confuse and threaten initiates the elaboration of new constructs and construct relationships." (p. 212)

If it is true, however, that a person will choose to

reconstrue people (and events) in particular ways rather than others, that make no sense to a consultant, and seem "stupid", "stubborn", then it may be worth the consultant considering that the client might have chosen his particular reconstructions because the alternative would require a major revaluation of the view of his world that is central to his identity. If the consultant wishes to 'force' him to do this (if he can) in various ways because he believes it is necessary, or 'better for him', then perhaps he should think carefully about the consequences of so doing and be prepared in his role to help the client, if he needs help, to cope with the personal ramifications involved:

"A monkey was sitting in his favourite tree during a sudden flood. Seeing a lot of his fellow creatures being swept away in the flood, and being a helpful monkey, he kept reaching out his long arm into the flood waters to save the creatures, which he pulled out and put in a large flat part in a fork in the boughs of the tree. The little brown things with four legs and with or without fur were mostly grateful to the monkey but the oblong silver things with big mouths seemed upset. In fact the silver things all died, but the monkey assumed that this was because they had been in the water too long, and his help had come too late. He did not understand why it was the fish were not grateful for his technical assistance." (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1982, p. 3.9)

#### (v) Choosing Models of Man

Of course, ideas about the sorts of processes discussed in this section are not unique to Personal Construct Theory. The "halo effect" first given prominence by Thorndike (1920) is the term given to the widely noted phenomenon that people tend to give consistently good ratings (in experiments) to the person whom they like and consistently bad ratings to those whom they do not like, or that there

are certain central or salient traits for people which can affect the overall impression of a person (see for example the discussion by Nisbett and Wilson, 1977).

Cognitive consistency theories, such as those based on and developed from Festinger's Dissonance Theory (e.g. Wicklund and Brehm, 1976, Aronson, 1978), Heider's Balance Theory (1958), Tannenbaum's Congruity Theory, (1978), Secord and Backman's Interpersonal Congruity Theory (1964 1965) are entirely concerned with cognitive 'restructuring' processes by which a person maintains acceptable consistencies for himself. Their influence has been wide in terms of the commonality of the view that a person will tend to 'ignore' unacceptable 'disconfirmatory evidence' (e.g. Jones and Nisbett, 1971).

Secord and Backman, as also McCall and Simmons (1966) and Rosenberg (1968) are interested in how this cognitive activity is undertaken by a person in order to 'validate' important conceptions of himself. The idea that there are "self-serving biases" or "ego-defences" in our constructions of our world and others has a long history in psychology and social psychology. Thus Sherif and Cantril (1947) argued that: "If our ego is injured we resort to all kinds of rationalizations, to protective adjustments, to selective modes of reasoning ... in which we manipulate things, persons, memories or in a highly selective way".(p.100),

These sorts of ideas have been the focus of numerous

experiments, including the examination of attributional biases in attribution theory (e.g., Jones and Davis, 1978, Kelley, 1971, Stroebe, Eagly and Stroebe, 1977, Miller, Norman and Wright, 1978) and in the next chapter I shall refer to some of Heider's ideas about "egocentric" attributions. However, in the last chapter I suggested that precise generalization about these aspects of a person's cognitions are problematic - and Ross (1977) nicely illustrates some of the problems that someone delving into the mass of literature and experimental research might encounter:

"It is far from obvious that any single demonstration can add very much to the existing state of knowledge (or, perhaps more accurately, subtract very much from the existing state of confusion) on the topic of motivational biases. By now there is ample evidence that no simple encompassing bias of a self-serving nature exists. Indeed, seemingly "counterdefensive" tendencies have been demonstrated in some attributional contexts (e.g. Ross et al., 1974). As some reviewers of the relevant literature have begun to suggest, it is becoming necessary to specify so many situational moderator variables to account for failures to obtain self-serving biases that the heuristic value of the motivational concept is becoming subject to grave doubt.. Unfortunately, the quest for a "critical" experiment - i.e., one that proved the existence (or the impossibility) of motivational effects on perceptual or cognitive processes in a manner that could not be rebutted by the offended side in the debate - has proved to be an exercise in futility, a "Snark-hunt" to be repeated by successive generations of scientists. Even the most confident of investigators must wonder if the search for self-serving biases will be similarly frustrated.

In the end of course:-

".the decisions taken on how to make sense of the activities and accounts of the persons amongst whom research is carried out must be acknowledged to be based upon something other than rational points about collecting data in an efficient and effective manner. At this point there is a choice between several different models of man which have been developed in the literature of the social sciences. Although the proponents of different models conduct occasional

skirmishes at the borders to suggest that one model is currently superior to the other, there is no basis for assessing them in terms of truth or falsity, but only in terms of clarity, usefulness, credibility or propriety, when employed in understanding the world". (Sims, 1978, pp. 9.21 - 9.22)

Kelly's theory is not a 'substantive' one (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) about any particular aspect of a person's construing of his world, and therefore I have drawn upon a wide range of other, helpful ideas, and will continue to do so. I do believe that it pays insufficient attention to the social context of construct development, and to values as a basis for selective and contextual perception. However, as a formal theory within which to set an understanding of the other ideas, in relation to the psychology of problem-solving I have come to find it 'work' for me, including as an explanation for why it is that people do appear so often not to conform to the "patterns":

"Some clients get themselves into a series of troubles. The therapist cannot understand why they keep inviting "disaster". The therapist becomes confused and unhappy. He is not amused by the client's whimsical adventures. From a hedonistic point of view, the client's behaviour does not make sense. The therapist, if he is a thorough convert of hedonism, decides that the simplest explanation is that the client is trying to "destroy" himself. Perhaps the client is so hostile to himself, his associates, and the therapist that he takes a fierce joy in setting them at naught.

In a case of this sort, however, the therapist should first take a look at the permeability of the constructs under which the actions have been taken. Perhaps the client is not risking so much after all. He may see himself as an exotic person. Perhaps the "painful" consequences of his acts are ones which he finds interesting, tantalizing, and well worth elaborating. Perhaps he is experiencing nothing that he cannot take in his stride. To be sure, he suffers "pain" and "inconvenience". But that, too, he can partially understand, he can explore systematically, he can experiment with. He may run to the therapist sobbing or crying for help. That, also, is an adventure.

One discovers more interesting therapist responses that way! In such a case the therapist should question whether or not the client is as confused as he looks - or as confused as the therapist is - or whether he is not elaborating a field of activity under the aegis of a highly permeable set of constructs". (Kelly, 1955, pp. 525-526)

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter has discussed what was, in some ways, the least interesting aspect of this research for me. For although it involved a great deal of work in analysing the data, it was the most expected and 'known' for me and did not confront me and excite me in the same way as some of the other theoretical areas. Nevertheless, less confronting and exciting as it may have been for me, it represents a fundamental 'base-line' for any future development I might attempt of methods and approaches to facilitate modelling and analysis of problem-significant others.

### (i) Purpose and Context

The theories that a person will draw upon for construing and modelling others will be those within his overall construct system that are relevant to his particular purposes and situation at the time; 'other definition' occurs within the context of the 'definition of the situation' as "...the sum of all recognized information, from the point of view of the actor, which is relevant to his locating himself and others, so that he can engage in self-determined lines of action and interaction." (Ball, 1972, p.63, my emphasis) Once again we return to the importance of learning about the person's construction of his problem-situation, in particular the salient values which, with beliefs, determine what is significant to know and discover about a person-- and what is not.

(ii) Contrast and Similarity

For learning about a person's theories about others a Personal Construct Theory Perspective points to the importance of trying to learn about the person's bi-polar constructs; "What was the alternative hypothesis from his point of view? The psychology of personal constructs lays great stress upon knowing the answer to this kind of question." (Kelly, 1955, p. 322).

(iii) Formal Analysis and Modelling

Since Kelly devised the repertory grid as a technique for operationalizing this theory, there has been a proliferation of uses and developments of this technology. As Fransella and Bannister (1977) point out, the technology has acquired a life of its own, often apart from the theory and with a sophistication of statistical and mathematical analyses that may be entirely opaque to the client. There is also the problem that repertory grids, as with a great deal of experimental psychological work, has often been used with scant attention to purpose and context. The answer to the question "In what important way are two of these people alike which distinguishes them from the third?" would depend on what particular aspects of the others the person is interested in at the time.

However, Robert and Janet did find the process of working with a repertory grid of considerable use in their thinking about others. They did so because the grids were used for particular purposes as means for focussing and encouraging dialogue and reflection about others, with us, with each

other, with themselves. It was the process which it encouraged and assisted that was important, with the discussion around their choice of appropriate constructs as useful and revealing to them and us as their final choice of the constructs to put in the grid. It enabled them to reflect explicitly on the important ways they did distinguish between their problem-significant others, how these people were grouped together, as potential allies or opponents, and to become clearer about the worth or otherwise of developing or maintaining relationships with some of these, and so on. Thus, if the repertory grid is used in these ways, contextually and as a tool for assisting and encouraging the explication and analysis of beliefs, it can be considerably helpful technique for assisting processes of explicit consideration of the meaning and significance of others in a complex problem. (See also Eden, Jones and Sims, 1982, on its use for other elements than people).

With respect to exploring construct relationships, Hinkle argues:

"Construct definitions must involve a statement of the location of a construct dimension in the context of a hierarchical network of construct implications. Here 'implication', 'prediction', 'anticipation', and 'expectation' are regarded as being synonymous terms. From this viewpoint, constructs will be regarded as having only one characteristic quality, or property; namely a construct has differential implications in a given hierarchical context." (1965, p.2)

Hinkle's Implications Grid is intended to offer a means of exploring implicative relationships and we have also used it to explore the relationships between values by asking the question "Considering the outcome (Cij) do you believe that outcome (Ck1) is also implied?" (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p. 168). Thus an Imp Grid can be used as a basis for



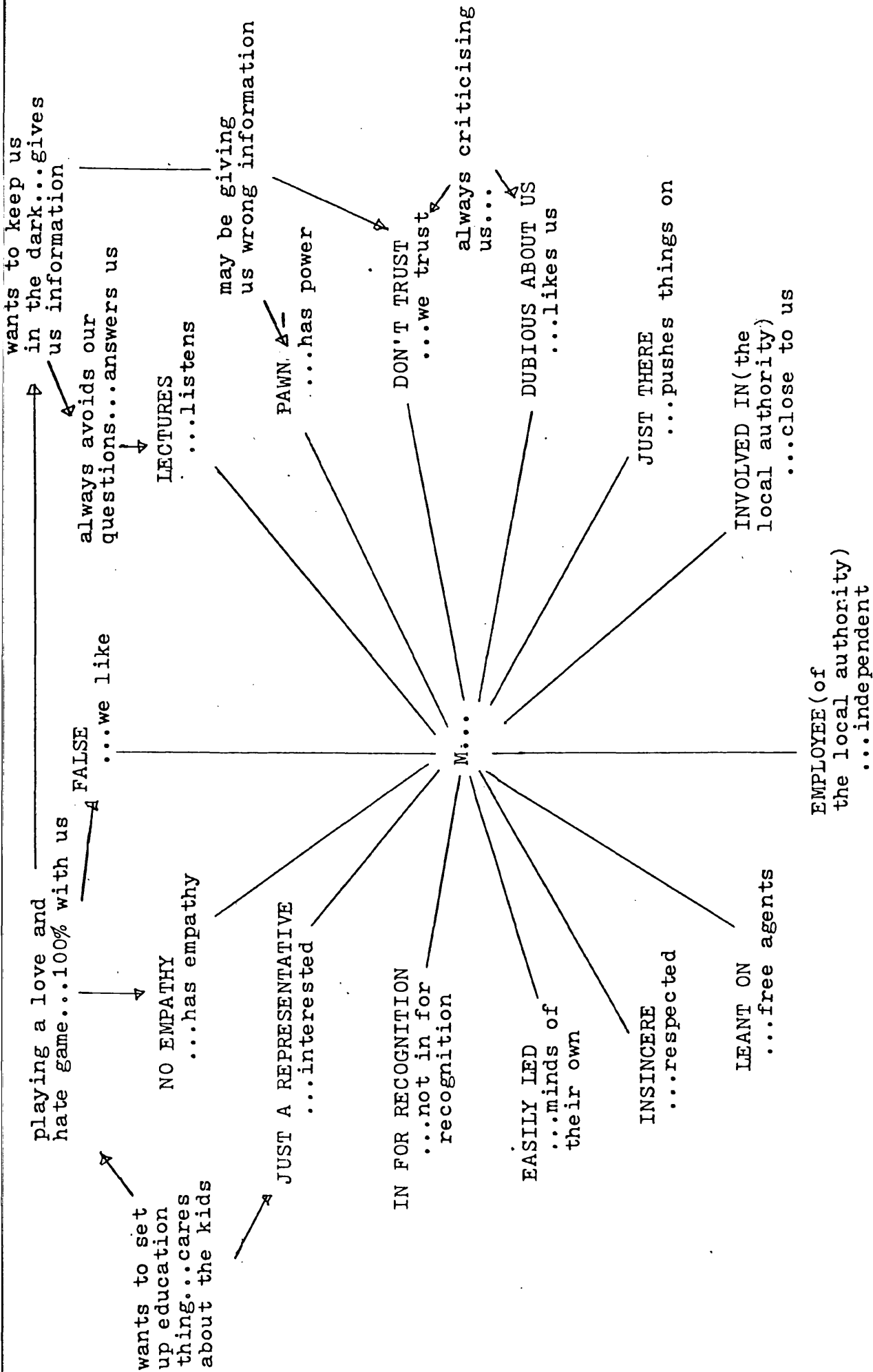
exploring the relationships between a person's constructs in his construct system with this question, or indeed by adapting Hinkle's own question "If a person who was currently on this pole of this construct were suddenly to be placed on the other, what other constructs would he also change on, if any?" In terms of 'implicative' relationships it seems to be the case that sometimes a person is aware of some relationship between ideas and entities without being able to make explicit the nature of the relationship (a sort of 'rule-of-thumb' link that we express in cognitive maps by a straight line 'connotative' link). However, in the context of problem-solving and policy analysis it seems important not to lose sight of the basic tenet of the theory, that man is in the business of making sense of his world in order to predict and control it, that constructs and their relationships crucially involve a person's processes of explanation and prediction.

Therefore in future it seems worth experimenting with questions, in preference, such as the following: "If a person is this, (e.g. "Has empathy" rather than "no empathy") do any of these other constructs tell you why?"; "If you knew a person had empathy could you predict that he would also therefore be any of the others?" In this way, it may, for example, not be necessary for the process to be repeated with each of the constructs in the grid for the network of relationships between the constructs to emerge in the form of a hierarchical system of explanatory and predictive relationships. In terms of future developments, the speedy and convenient use of the repertory

grid is greatly facilitated if it is computer-assisted and there is room for development of a 'user-friendly' computer-assisted Imp-Grid which could provide output, ideally either in the form of a visual map of implicative relationships or an explanatory-predictive network such as that provided by the computer analyses of cognitive maps.

In this situation we attempted to offer further help to Robert and Janet by collecting the constructs derived from the repertory grid in a very simple concept/cognitive map such as that illustrated on page 7.51. This became a focus to help them reflect and negotiate in more detail about particular actors who concerned and confused them, to become clearer about why they felt concerned and confused, and to think about appropriate ways of acting towards the others. However, although this may be helpful enough in a range of situations, it is of course a very crude form of modelling. If an important role for explicit analysis is to aid the prediction and control of problem-significant others, then it is likely to be helpful if some way of explicitly modelling the strengths of particular inferential and predictive relationships to assist this process is developed, in ways other than the somewhat unsatisfactory arbitrary allocation of numerical weights.

I would also expect it to be helpful to develop means of managing complexity through organizing a person's theories about another in terms of the categories or 'groups' of ideas that seem to the individual to represent particular



:Part of a map constructed from collecting the constructs derived from one repertory grid to model one key actor. He is characterized by the poles in caps.

arenas of interest, as problems within an issue are currently distinguished into 'groups' in the technique of cognitive mapping.(e.g.,Eden, Jones and Sims, 1982).If these arenas of interest in a person's theories about others are hierarchically related as we would expect them to be, then the question raised earlier about how the dynamics of hierarchy might be modelled seems relevant here. An approach to organizing, or clustering, theories in building explicit models of others is also related to the content of the next final chapter of the findings, and I shall return to it there.

(iv) An Approach to the Client-Consultant Relationship

Finally, this chapter has discussed a particular view of 'man the scientist' who builds his own knowledge and wisdom about his social world in order to "predict and control". Elsewhere we have argued that:

"Our view of behaviour, judgement, and decision-making in organizations sees experience-gathering as an act of scientific endeavour with more validity to the decision maker than that activity concerned with deliberate and formal experimentation which we normally designate science. This is not to suggest that experience-gathering is necessarily different from the consequences of experimentation, but the heuristics we use for becoming wise are richer and reflect a more complex form of 'non-parametric correlation analysis' than we are able to conduct when constrained by the explicit logic and axioms of mathematical statistics.....We have been arguing that decision-makers need to be encouraged to see as legitimate knowledge their own subjective understanding of their organizational life so that they may learn to know what they know, and learn from its implications, and thus learn by enquiring in a relevant way."(Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979,p.5)

This is as relevant to the process of helping others think about their problem-significant others as to other aspects of problem-construction. I do not believe that we are always very wise or enquiring or successful in our prediction and

control attempts but I cannot conceive of a starting point to working with a person on his significant others that does not regard the particular theories the person has. Indeed, in this area, if they are not paid attention to, the person is unlikely to pay much attention to the consultant.

## CHAPTER EIGHT:

### THE COGNITION OF MODELLING OTHERS(ii): PROCESSES OF ROLE- TAKING

#### INTRODUCTION

The world I have been describing is one in which two people were continually involved in attempting to understand others so that they could better "predict and control" them in the effort to tackle their issue. In short, they were continually engaged in processes of what in symbolic interactionism is called role-taking: "imaginatively constructing the attitudes of the other so as to anticipate the behavior of the other." (Lauer and Handel, 1977, p.62)

In this final chapter of the research findings I shall explore Robert and Janet's theorizing about others in terms of their processes of role-taking. Of this activity, Heider (1958), from a perspective which includes, like Personal Construct Theory, a view of man as concerned "to predict and control events involving himself and others" (p. 146) argues that:

"... if we removed all knowledge of scientific psychology from our world, problems in interpersonal relations might easily be coped with and solved much as before. Man would still 'know' how to avoid doing something asked of him, and how to get someone to agree with him; he would still 'know' when someone was angry and when someone was pleased. He could even offer sensible explanations for the 'whys' of much of his behavior and feelings. In other words, the ordinary person has a great and profound understanding of himself and other people which, though unformulated or only vaguely conceived, enables him to interact with others in more or less adaptive ways." (p. 2)

It will have become clear by now that I cannot disagree with this view and I shall show how Robert and Janet's construing of others involved a complex body of knowledge about people 'in general' and particular individuals. However, - as also part of our commonsense understandings of ourselves and others - most of us have had the experience of misunderstanding others, and ourselves being misunderstood, too often to believe that we are always successful in our role-taking attempts, nor indeed are all equally good at it. In this chapter I shall also explore some possible reasons for this aspect of interpersonal construing in terms of the data from this case. It does not seem to me to be either particularly surprising or 'reprehensible', but it has some implications for an approach to explicit enquiry and analysis of problem-significant others.

#### A COMPLEX AND EVALUATIVE RANGE OF EXPLANATIONS

In the last chapter I pointed out how a great deal of experimental work has been carried out to explore the nature of people's 'implicit personality' theories, and how much of this work has centred upon trait-attributions. As Schneider (1973) points out, if people are provided with, or asked to provide, trait categories, then it is not surprising if other modes of explanation and understanding do not prominently emerge. Thus too Hastorf, Richardson and Dornbusch (1958) urged a shift from the "trait" approach to a study of the perceptual categories that are actually used by and relevant to a person, rather than ask a person "to predict the responses of other people to attitude or

personality items that may be quite meaningless to (him)"  
(p. 56).

Here I shall show that Robert and Janet had a range of ideas for understanding and predicting others and that a more helpful approach to examining these processes by individuals is in the terms of Toulmin (1969), who suggests that:

"... we should expect to find varied modes of psychological explanations applicable on different levels and different situations ... our modes of describing human behavior are themselves also manifold and distinct. We characterize a man's behavior in many different kinds of ways, according to the demands of the particular context. In isolation from all contextual cues, the question "How did so-and-so act?" is ambiguous. We cannot answer it until its force is made precise and explicit... A man's reactions, skills and capacities; his performances, achievements, and intellect; his moods and propensities; feelings, emotions, and sensitivities; his character, disposition, and personality; and so on - all of these are not so many independent psychological constituents or processes going on within a man. Rather they reflect our alternative ways of characterizing an agent, when we look at him from different standpoints and with different questions in mind." (pp. 95-96, my emphasis)

#### (i) Ends and Means

Robert and Janet were interested in who could, and would, help them in their efforts to tackle their problem. When they described another as "has empathy", "he understands", "he sees the problem", is "helping morally", "doing it from deep down" and so on, they were saying that the other had the same values and objectives as themselves, based in beliefs about the nature of the unemployed kids' situation, its unacceptability and appropriate ways to help the kids, including the setting up of a training workshop. By understanding another's beliefs and values in this way the



others became predictable for the future - "he will help us" and they could act appropriately in the light of that prediction.

"We may say that the motive of the murderer was to obtain the money of the victim. Here "motive" means the state of affairs, the end, which the action has been undertaken to bring about. We shall call this kind of motive the "in-order to motive". From the point of view of the actor this class of motives refers to the future." (Schutz, 1970, p. 126 my emphasis.)

Attributing shared values and objectives was of course an interpretation of the other's actions and attitudes with respect to them and Robert and Janet had not only to interpret friendly, sympathetic and helpful behaviour but also that which they construed as hostile and antagonistic. As I have showed in other chapters this sort of behaviour often caused them considerable distress and anxiety. It was hurtful and it just "didn't make sense" and while it didn't make sense Robert and Janet did not know how to define and act appropriately towards the other. Eventually their way of rendering the other explicable and predictable was to assign to him particular objectives or ends, different and opposed to their own, e.g.: - "The longer this goes on, the more I think it the confrontation he wants, not the workshop, he is not really interested in the kids" (Robert). In this way, as Peters (1958) suggests:

"The paradigm case of a human action is when something is done in order to bring about an end. So the usual way of explaining an action is to describe it as a action of a certain sort by indicating the end which (the person) had in mind ... We assume that men are rational and that they will take means that lead to ends if they have information and want the ends. 'His reason' is an explanation in terms of what Popper (1945) calls 'the logic of the situation'."

Since the others believed to be "trying to nullify what we are doing" were still, however, involved in the project, Robert and Janet had to find some way of explaining this and they did so by attributing beliefs about means and ends, where in this case the 'means' were 'just' means, of little personal interest, concern, intrinsic value.

"He is just in for recognition" (Janet).

"He's just in for his politics, the kids don't really matter" (Janet).

"He's playing a love and hate game. He wants the workshop to help his side, to do his education thing" (Robert).

"We think it helps him to do what he wants to do which is to meet the people he didn't know before, the hierarchy" (Robert).

As I showed in the last chapter they reconstructed the history of those who had been "100% with us" and now were "trying to nullify what we are doing" with ideas such as the following: "I didn't detect this before, but I think he was linking up with us because it was one of the ways he could do what he wants to do about his politics and not about the kids at all" (Robert). In doing this they were constructing for themselves a comprehensible 'biography' of the other where the past could now be a basis for predicting the future in ways that could allow them to intervene and if possible change it:

"Actors are thought by observers to have biographies and to engage the world with them. The grammar produces a link between the two. Motives are resources for connecting an event with a biography, and they generate the event as a member of the class

of experience owned by a body (as depicted in common sense).

Similarly motives depict for us how the event shows or displays a biography. In as far as the biography and the event can be seen to be membership, this is done through the ascription of motive. Otherwise - in the absence of such a grammar - the observers would be unable to organize the current flow of socially intelligible events, nor could they observe the products of biographies, i.e. they could not see interaction as a course of history". (Blum and McHugh, 1971, p. 106)

### (ii) Intelligibility and Warrantability

Buss (1978) suggests that:

"The major cases involving reason explanations of human action include (a) justifying, evaluating, or appraising the action; (b) stating the goal, end or intention of the action; and (c) stating the means or instrumentality of the goal, end or intention of the action. All of these reason-type explanations help to make an action intelligible by attaching meaning to the action in terms of the rules for social behaviour." (p. 1314, my emphasis).

As I have shown on several previous occasions Robert and Janet's attempts to understand others was not some neutral 'objectivated' process but crucially involved some kind of evaluation, in effect "Do I approve of or disapprove of, like or dislike, this actor?" In the complex dialectic of their social interaction, their assignment of ends and means was both the cause and the consequence of their evaluations of the other. Somebody who rejected them and therefore came to be disliked also had to be explained in terms of 'wrongful' goals and values among which were deliberative opposition to them. In this case, as Heider (1958) asserts, "...if we like a person we are more apt to interpret his act as a benefit; conversely, if we dislike a person we are more likely to interpret his act as a harm." (p. 258) Although I find it difficult to agree with his proposition that motives do not refer to some psychological feature of a person

in relation to action (as values, not 'drives'), and see avowed motives as often open to dispute, this evaluative aspect of assigning means and ends is captured by Wright-Mills (1940) as follows; (see also Blum and Mchugh, op.cit).

"This imputation and avowal of motives by actors are social phenomena to be explained ... The aspect of motive which this conception grasps is its intrinsically social character. A satisfactory or adequate motive is one that satisfies the questioners of an act or program, whether it be the other's or the actor's. As a word, a motive tends to be one which is to the actor and to the other members of the situation an unquestioned answer to questions concerning social and lingual conduct. A stable motive is an ultimate in justificatory conversation. The words which in a type situation will fulfil this function are circumscribed by the vocabularies of motives acceptable for such situations. Motives are accepted justifications for present, future, or past programs or acts". (pp. 906-907).

Scott and Lyman (1968), following a narrow definition of accounts but one which is relevant to Robert and Janet's attempts to understand negatively evaluated others, as those given by an individual to explain unanticipated or untoward behaviour of one's own or others, suggest that these can be classified into excuses and justifications. Excuses are those which involve admitting an action is wrong or inappropriate but full responsibility is denied. Justifications are those where responsibility is accepted but the wrongness or inappropriateness of the action is denied. We can also see that accounting for other person's behaviour can also involve 'condemnations' and these are complexly interlinked with the process of accounting for one's own actions when "Accounting is not only a method for revealing the meanings of one's own actions but also for warranting or justifying what one does." (Harre, 1979, p. 184). Thus it was that

in assigning different values and means-ends to others who were "trying to nullify what we are doing" which they could condemn, Robert and Janet were also making it acceptable, legitimate, for themselves to work against the other. Thus in one of the earlier debates between Robert and Janet when she was unsure about another's deliberative opposition to them and complained that "... I think it's wrong to be all secretive like this. We will become as bad as T..", Robert retorted: "But he is trying to nullify what we are doing. We have to be like this. Otherwise he will be able to combat what we are doing." Later on when Janet came to agree that the other was "... dangerous, he doesn't care about the kids and I agree he is trying to get rid of us", then she also agreed, "We can't tell him what we are doing. We have to be on our own."

The process of justifying also entered into another aspect of the process of attributing means and ends to others, the awareness by Janet that a person could have a number of goals and objectives, some of which might be more important than others or conflict with one another in ways which might cause confusion and anxiety. Thus Janet was, before she came to the conclusion that others were "trying to get rid of us" ready to consider that another had a variety of concerns which might account for his ambivalent and hostile behaviour:

"I think he is with us and does want to help the kids, but he is under a lot of pressure from his bosses and he can't afford to be seen as a rebel. He is being like this because he is worried he could lose his job."

"I think he does still like us but he is worried about whether the Youth Service will still be in control, where he is going to fit it, where the kids will be, whether A.. will have a job. That's what he is thinking about."

While Janet still believed that another liked them and cared about the kids, she was ready to see a conflict of goals, or a variety of concerns as an acceptable justification for the other's ambivalence or apparent antagonism towards them. She was also manifesting a greater complexity of constructs for 'interpersonal construing' than Robert and I shall return to this topic again.

### (iii) Attitudes and Responses to Us

As I have shown on many occasions, a crucial question for Robert and Janet as a basis for both explanations and prediction was another's attitude to them. In this way they were constructing an image of a person's beliefs and attitudes. about them and his feelings of liking or disliking which could explain his behaviour, including his readiness to "listen" or "lecture". As Heider (1958) points out, attribution of liking or disliking is a fairly common sense basis for understanding and prediction in relationships: "For instance, the subject may be presented with the datum that o intentionally benefits p. The question is posed, why does he do it? ... one of the most common is, "Because he likes p". (p. 173)

In, however, attributing feelings of liking or disliking,

Robert and Janet were not assigning specific ends and means but making some much vaguer attribution, which is what makes the notion of "feelings" or "emotions" so difficult to classify except in terms of themselves, of the kind suggested by Heider: "If p likes x, there is ... something positive and satisfying about x for p" (ibid, p.138). This does not mean, of course, that an explanation for the reason why 'x' is "positive" or "satisfying" for 'p' cannot be approached more precisely through notions of values about what specific aspect of 'x' or 'x's' actions are rewarding means or ends for 'p'; as the social exchange theorists (e.g. Blau, 1964, 1974, Kelley and Thibaut, 1978) argue and those who have experimentally explored 'reciprocation of benefits' as a basis for attraction and likings (e.g. Stapleton, Nacci and Tedeschi, 1973).

Certainly Robert and Janet's own feelings of liking and disliking appeared to strongly derive from the construed support or rejection offered by the other to their own valued images of self. In her criticism of Robert's own actions towards others "I don't think you realize how rude and nasty you can be yourself" as one explanation of why others might be hostile to them, Janet also appeared to include this in her theorizing about others. However, their main conclusions about the others attitude to them was in terms of the attributions of means and ends as discussed above; i.e. their theories for making sense of and predicting others suggested that if a person did not like them, he must have opposing values and objectives, which will include those to do with deliberately "trying to get

rid of us". This could then become the basis for explanations such as the following:-

"He is listening to us much more now because he knows we are getting contacts and he could lose control" (Janet).

"He is worried because he thinks we are excelling too much in the right direction" (Robert).

In these ways, in terms of the evaluative aspect of their understanding of others, those who did not like them were 'recalcitrant', and also recalcitrant because their theorizing suggested that the others' values and objectives were different to their own. As I pointed out in Chapter Seven, I do not wish to suggest that they were wrong in their assumptions about the others but rather here to point to the complexity in their construing of others of what Heider calls the interaction between causal attribution and "affective significance":

"... a given datum is connected by chains of reasons with a number of possible underlying causes belonging to the level of relatively invariant traits, or attitudes. From these positive underlying causes the one will be selected that best fits the ideas and wishes the person has about himself and other people. The examples also show the major influence of self-attitudes on the interpretations of the actions of other people ...

Thus, there are two factors that determine the selection of the acceptable attribution; (1) the reason has to fit the wishes of the person, and (2) the datum has to be plausibly derived from the reason. The first refers to the affective significance of an event. The reason is sought that is personally acceptable. It is usually a reason that flatters us, puts us in a good light, and is imbued with an added potency by the attribution. The second factor is that of the "rationality" in every "rationalization". What is selected as acceptable cause is not just anything that fits with the personal needs and wishes of the life-space. It also has to fit the cognitive



expectations about connections between motives, attitudes and behavior, etc. It has to fit the system of naive psychology; the less far-fetched the rationalization is, the better it will follow this system." (ibid, pp. 172-173).

(iv) The Interventions of Others

Jones and Nisbett (1971), also Jones (1976), argue that there is a tendency for people to attribute the actions of others to stable personal dispositions while attributing their own actions to the consequence of situational factors or constraints. They give the example of the student who explains his inadequate performance in terms of such particular situational factors as a heavy workload, temporary emotional stress and so on, while his teacher, on the other hand, explains a poor performance in terms of the student's inability, or laziness, or neurotic ineptitude. In their article, they cite various experiments as confirmation of their hypothesis.

The distinction that Jones and Nisbett make between attributions to internal dispositions, on the one hand, and to external factors, on the other, follows the central distinction made by most writers within Attribution Theory. Thus, for example, Ross (1978) summarises the concerns of Attribution Theory, as being with:

"... two closely related tasks confronting a social observer: the observer seeks to identify the cause, or set of causes, to which some particular effect (i.e. some action or outcome) may most reasonably be attributed. The second task is social inference; the observer forms inferences about the attributes of relevant entities, that is, either the dispositions of actors or the properties of situations to which those actors have responded." (p. 339)

To see a person's actions arising from the meaning and significance he assigns to events, through the bringing to bear upon them of a set of beliefs and values.-the model of man held in this thesis- is to find a neat distinction between 'external-situational' and 'internal-dispositional' causes of action difficult to accept. For the person's response to an external entity or situation is a consequence of processes of 'internal' construing. Indeed to propose that an event or object is the cause of behaviour sounds very much like stimulus-response psychology.

Nevertheless, to propose that an external-internal categorisation of explanations for action is unsatisfactory, is not to disagree with the idea that there is a useful distinction to be made between attributions which involve taking account of the contextuality, or contingency, of individuals' construing of different situations in different ways, including constructions of unanticipated events and the interventions of others: and attributions which involve the assignment of some stable, over-riding set of goals and objectives, or personality characteristics.

Robert and Janet lived in a world comprising networks of social relationships and if two crucial sets of relevant 'questions' for them about others were about their values and objectives and attitudes to them, another was centred on the degree to which a person had been or could in the future be influenced by some 'third party'. In the attributing of ends and means Robert and Janet were making sense of the others in terms of the continued 'biography'

of a purposeful human being with a relatively enduring set of values and objectives, directly relevant to their own situation, someone who, in effect, "had, and would continue, *ceteris paribus*, to seek to help us, or hinder us".

In explaining or predicting actions in terms of the interventions of others they were assuming some break between the past and the future on the basis that this person would not have acted, or will not act in future, in these ways to help or hinder us were it not for these interactions. This sort of understanding was of course an important feature of their consideration of the nature and outcomes of power relationships which I explored in detail in Chapters Four and Five. It was one in which they clearly did not see some neat distinction between an 'external' pressure and 'internal' dispositions in terms of the consequence of third parties' interventions.

Thus, for example, when Janet suggested that "... he is under a lot pf pressure from his bosses ... He is being like this because he is worried he could lose his job", she was explaining the salience of the social pressure in terms of the others concern or objective not to lose his job. Robert predicted that a person could influence others because of his "respect power", on the basis that, "He doesn't say much but what he does say, is always sensible. People know that what he says is never foolish". In doing so he was attributing expectations and attitudes towards the specific person with respect, power and in

the others' appreciative judgements about the 'positive' value of 'wisdom', 'sensibleness'. When Janet suggested that "He is the sort of person people respect. He always knows the right thing to do", she was attributing beliefs and attitudes about the specific person and in terms of his being seen as offering something useful to a person's conceptions of means and ends.

A similar assumption of beliefs about means and ends in relation to the evaluation of a person was involved in the statements "He has a way of talking that makes them think he brings manna from heaven" (Robert), .. "He has made them think the group cannot do without him" (Janet). In suggesting that "He will talk to us if Mr. P.. asks him to, they are good friends", Janet was also making attributions about the nature and consequences of liking relationships between others that I discussed above.

Once again, of course, these theories involved evaluations where their feelings of approval or disapproval of the others affected the kinds of attributions they made, as I discussed in Chapter Five in terms of their constructions of power, for example, in distinguishing between "respect power" and manipulative power over "pawns". This kind of evaluation was also evident in the following attributions about personality characteristics and abilities as a basis for explanation and prediction discussed in the next section:

(v) Personality Characteristics and Abilities

Robert and Janet both explained and predicted the outcomes of relationships between others in terms of characteristics and abilities which had more to do with typical modes of behaviour than particular goals or objectives: "They are just pawns, they don't have minds of their own" (Janet); "They are stupid, they do not see him for what he really is" (Robert). "These kids, they are easily led. He could turn them against(Robert)" (Janet).

More generally they also frequently attributed characteristics and abilities to predict how a person might act in particular circumstances "We don't want him. He always makes a mess of things" (Janet). "I don't think he would help us to do this. He has empathy but he is a little too bureaucratic" (Robert). In the last quote this trait-type attribution seemed to operate in a way suggested by Peters (1958):

"Man is a rule-following animal. His actions are not simply directed towards ends; they also conform to social standards and conventions, and unlike a calculating machine he acts because of his knowledge of rules and objectives. For instance, we ascribe to people traits of character like honesty, punctuality, considerateness and meanness. Such terms do not, like ambition or hunger or sexual desire indicate the sorts of goals that man tends to pursue; rather they indicate the type of regulation he imposes on his conduct whatever his goals may be. A man who is ruthless, selfish, punctual, considerate, persistent and honest does not have any particular goals; rather he pursues whatever goals he has in particular sorts of ways." (p. 5)

However, sometimes characteristic modes of behaviour could both explain and be explained by particular goals, as for example in the statements: "They are young and foolish,

living in a world of fantasy. They want to have jobs that they cannot do" (Robert); "He never answers questions straight away anyway, he always wants to give a lecture, and if we ask him about this that he doesn't want us to find out about, he will do just the same. He won't give us a straight answer" (Janet).

#### DIFFICULTIES IN ROLE-TAKING

In these ways, particularly but not solely in attempting to explain and predict outcomes in relationships between people, Robert and Janet were drawing upon a complex set of ideas about people 'in general' and about particular individuals. Tagiuri (1969) asserts:

"The observations or inferences we make are principally about intentions, attitudes, emotions, ideas, abilities, purposes, traits, thoughts, perceptions, memories - events that are inside the person and strictly psychological. Similarly, we attend to certain psychological qualities of relationships between persons, such as friendship, love, power, and influence. We attribute to a person properties of consciousness and self-determination, and the capacity for representation of his environment, which in turn mediates his actions. Granted the properties last mentioned, the perceiver may, through his own presence and behavior in the phenomenal world of the other, cause changes in the way in which the person whose state he is trying to judge presents himself. This is, of course, quite different from the way in which a rock is a source of cues for a perceiver. In addition in person perception the similarity between the perceiver and the perceived object is greater than in any other case. This unique fact probably inclines and enables the perceiver to make full use of his own experience in perceiving, judging, or inferring another's state or intentions." (p. 396)

However, I should also like to suggest that their processes of interpersonal construing also indicate some of the limitations that can operate on accurate role-taking, particularly for people who are totally absorbed by their

problem.

(i) Construct Complexity for Construing Others

Jones and Nisbett (1971.) propose that there may be a variety of reasons for divergent perceptions of the causes of behaviour by the 'actor' and 'observer'. One has to do with differences in information available to each person. An individual has more detailed and accurate knowledge of his own past, his own emotional state and intentions, and his own idiosyncratic patterns of behaviour in different situations than the 'observer'. The latter, who does not have this information is likely to infer consistency in the absence of evidence to the contrary. The information available is also of a different salience to the actor and observer. For the former, it is the situation he is in that is the focus of attention, "the environment with its constantly shifting demands and opportunities", (p. 85). For the observer it is not the situational cues impinging on the actor which are salient, but the other's behaviour, which is seen as a manifestation of some internal quality possessed by him.

They also suggest that one factor in the tendency to attribute stable personal dispositions, or traits, to others, most of whom are rarely seen in more than one or two roles, may be the behavioural consistency encouraged by the role a person enacts. Another factor may be the consistency of response another makes to one's own behaviour, which is then mistakenly seen as a manifestation of enduring personality characteristics. Not only may an 'observer not have

enough information, to militate against a trait account of behaviour, but tendencies towards cognitive consistency may result in the ignoring of disconfirmatory evidence, as may motives to enhance self-esteem.

Most of these ideas of Jones and Nisbett seem to be entirely relevant to Robert and Janet's situation, and indeed to account more generally for the difficulties of successful role-taking. I have already discussed how their own behaviour may have exacerbated the hostility of some others to them, and the way in which they sought to find some comprehensive and predictable consistent biography for another. I have also discussed in some detail the role of their self-image values in their construction of others which relates significantly to the different salience of information to the 'actor' and 'observer'. I shall return briefly to this later.

It also seems obvious that we cannot be another person. We have not had his experiences, and although we may share some of our values and perspectives with some others, in sum our construct systems are personal to us. Yet people do differ in their capacity to understand the others, to 'get inside the other's head' in colloquial language. In his Sociality Corollary, Kelly (1955) specifically addresses the question of interpersonal understanding, through his notion of playing a role in a social process involving another person. Unlike Mead's (1934) harmonious concept of role-taking, where the possibilities of serious misunderstandings between people are not



addressed, Kelly points out that our understanding of others may well be "minimal, fragmentary, or misguided" (p. 98). He suggests that people vary in their capacity to understand others and, with considerable cogency for the context of policy problems, that those who do have a high capacity to understand others are in a position, for example, to assume a leadership role in a group. Kelly also insists that commonality of construct systems is not essential for effective role-taking, but rather that what is involved is a capacity to subsume others' construction systems.

"If we can predict accurately what others will do, we can adjust ourselves to their behavior. If others know how to tell what we will do, they can adjust themselves to our behavior... This mutual adjustment to each other's viewpoint takes place, in terms of the theory of personal constructs, because, to some extent, our construction system subsumes the construction systems of others and theirs, in part, subsume ours." (p. 96).

Kelly's Sociality Corollary has been seen by later proponents of Personal Construct Theory to suggest that competence in interpersonal construing is related to the complexity of constructs an individual can bring to bear on social interaction. Thus, for example, Adams-Webber (1979) suggests:

"Thomas (1977) argues that 'sociality', that is, construing the construction process of another person as the basis for participating in a role relationship with him, involves far more than simple verbal agreement or even behavioural prediction: 'it is a question of exchanging patterns of meaning, or being able to hold similar and elaborate sets of relationships in close juxtaposition'. Ultimately, what is needed, according to Thomas, is the ability to hold in mind simultaneously different systems of meaning, exploring each in relation to the other and identifying common areas of reference. This hypothesis is consistent with the general assumption

that the person who is able to bring more than one set of related constructs to bear on the same social interaction is in a better position to interpret it from the point of view of another person and to make accurate inferences about the other's construct system." (p. 105).

We can relate this to some important differences between Robert and Janet in their construing of the construction processes of others. As I described in the last chapter in the period of transition between deciding that somebody was "100% with us" rather than "trying to get rid of us" Janet was more circumspect or propositional in her thinking about others. In terms of the ideas above, she had a more complex range of constructs for subsuming the construct systems of others. Thus, for example, in statements such as the following: "I think he is just worried because we are getting these contacts, and beginning to be all secretive ourselves" she was able to consider how others might construe their own behaviour. When she suggested that "I think he is with us and does want to help the kids, but he is under a lot of pressure from his bosses and he can't afford to be seen as a rebel" she was considering the way in which the other might feel considerable anxiety as a consequence of social pressure. Similarly, when she suggested of another that "He is worried about whether the Youth Service will still be in control, where he is going to fit in, where the kids will be, whether A.. will have a job..." she was attributing a range of concerns and objectives to the other person.

#### (ii) Evaluation and Tolerance in Construing Others

Janet had a more complex range of constructs to bring to bear on construing the construction processes of others. She was

also, however, on the whole more tolerant of differences in constructions than Robert. I have already described the way in which their construing of others was an evaluative one. For Robert in particular, if he liked or approved of somebody, usually because the other was seen to like and approve of him, then that person could be construed at the 'positive' side of the constructs he used to differentiate between people. If he did not then the person was, in simple terms, defined as recalcitrant.

It is difficult to see how we can avoid being evaluative in our judgements of others. At the same time, there are good reasons why a great many approaches for helping, for example, the working of teams, suggest that we should make our evaluations of others and their ideas with some care - circumspectly, propositionally. For without that care we are likely to set up some unhelpful dynamics such as those discussed in Chapter Six and in the process forget to, or are never given opportunity to, learn about the world as it is seen by the others. As Jones and Nisbett (op.cit) point out:

"Once we have decided that a person is hostile or dependent, a wide variety of behaviors can be construed as support for this supposition, including even behaviors commonly taken as implying the opposite of the trait ascription. A kind behavior on the part of a 'hostile' person may be perceived as insincere, manipulative or condescending." (p. 90).

In this way our anticipatory hypotheses may become self-fulfilling prophecies that in turn may be to our own detriment, not because we have to tolerate what we have reflectively decided to oppose but because we may have decided to oppose on the basis of inaccurate information about the other's point of view.

(iii) Self as the Central Figure

Chapter Six described in some detail the importance of Robert and Janets' self-image concerns to them and to their construing of others. The likely centrality of ourselves, as conceived in our cognitions and values about ourselves, is also relevant to understanding some of the potential difficulties in accurate role-taking. As Kelly asserts:

"No two people can play precisely the same role in the same event, no matter how closely they are associated. For one thing, in such an event, each experiences the other as an external figure. For another, each experiences a different person as the central figure (namely, himself). Finally, the chances are that, in the course of events, each will get caught up in a different stream and hence be confronted with different navigational problems."  
(1955, p.55)

The notion of self as the central figure and 'navigational problems' are not unrelated. For it is when a person is confronted with a particularly difficult and absorbing navigational problem, such as his policy issue, that it may be particularly difficult to be fully aware of, and sensitive to, others' complex and potentially different perspectives. I suspect that Robert was not unique in the way in which a great deal of his construing of others as described already in preceeding chapters, often seemed to reflect the following suggestion of Heider:

"... we are inclined to assume a "for our sake" attitude even if the person benefitted us unintentionally, and an "against us" attitude when the harm was unintentional. Bertrand Russell (1950) has remarked that "One of the odd effects of the importance which each of us attaches to himself is that we tend to imagine our own good or evil fortune to be the purpose of other people's actions ..." (p. 151). In these cases, an egocentric point of view has been adopted, so that, of several changes resulting from the action of the person, the perceiver has selected the one important to himself rather than the one significant to the agent and which has in fact guided the actions of the agent." (p. 120).

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In this chapter I have elaborated further aspects of Robert and Janet's modelling and models of others in their attempts to explain, predict and control. Their complex construing of others in the ways discussed in this chapter bears out the assertion of Hargreaves (1980) that "common-sense man, it appears, adheres to a more complex and elaborate set of motives, and the interrelations between different types of motive, than many psychological theories either themselves contain or concede to naive psychology" (p. 221).

The kinds of things Robert and Janet paid attention to in their explanatory, anticipatory framework for construing their problem-significant others also seem eminently, if not trivially, recognizable as those which a great many people might pay attention to and use on a basis for understanding and predicting others particularly in the context of a complex problem where the others are importantly implicated in a successful or otherwise outcome. Robert and Janet wanted to know about the others' goals and objectives (including beliefs about means and ends) in relation to their situations so that they might have some basis for anticipating what the others might do in future, to help or hinder them. They wanted to know whether the others liked them or disliked them, how they evaluated their worth and competence as other aspects of predicting the likelihood of assistance or opposition. Operating as they did within networks of relationships they were also interested in the mutual 'other-definitions' of the

individuals in those relationships - the beliefs about another's characteristics, the value attributed to those characteristics, including in relation to their usefulness for attaining own means and ends, feelings of liking or disliking, and constructions of the other's power in terms of his ability to reward or punish. These theories about others helped them to consider whether, and how, one person might influence another for or against them. In attempting to predict the way another person might behave in particular situations, including his receptivity to influence by some third person, Robert and Janet also attributed particular modes of behaviour, personality characteristics, and abilities.

The idea that a person may have a number of questions which he asks himself about others in relation to his own purposes, prior to or during an interaction, is commonplace in symbolic interactionism. Thus, for example, Hargreaves (1975) suggests that:-

"On entering the interaction, and sometimes, prior to it, each participant has the important task of deriving information about Other. This involves trying to find out as much as possible about Other that is likely to be relevant to the interaction. Among the most important questions that Person asks himself, though not always explicitly or consciously, are:

What is Other's role?  
How does Other perceive his role?  
What are Other's goals?  
What does Other expect to gain from the interaction?  
What are Other's intentions?  
How is Other going to behave towards me?

In other words, Person comes to the interaction with his own goals and roles and has the immediate task of assessing Other's roles and goals. Each participant will select information from Other's behaviour and make inferences and attributions about Other's roles,

goals, intentions, motives, personality and so on. Each participant must do this in relation to the other participant. Each will conclude with a conception of Other which will influence his behaviour towards Other ... he (also) creates his conception of the Other's conceptions of him .... (which) .... includes such questions as:

What does Other think my role is?  
What does Other think my goals are?  
How does Other think I am going to behave towards him?  
What motives and intentions is Other going to attribute to me?"  
(pp. 75-76).

( See also the 'questions' discussed by Goffman, 1959, Lauer and Handel, 1977, Mangham 1978.)

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to relate theory to practice, in particular how theory might affect approaches and techniques to helping with the analysis and handling of complex policy problems. At a general level of considering why a person might find helpful explicit tools to aid analysis of his problem-significant others, this chapter has described a process of theorizing, about a number of actors often in relations with one another, which reflects again the theme of complexity which has recurred in these findings. It is the potential complexity of theorizing about different but often interrelated aspects of others, including those others' constructions of their own others, that underlines a possibly relevant and useful role for explicit modelling in this area of problem construction; as a means of managing complexity and to facilitate fuller use of knowledge for explanation, prediction and control.

If one way of managing complexity is to make it explicit and represent it, another is then to find ways of structuring and organizing it. And if it is theoretically approp-

riate to see a person's construction of his problem-signif-  
others as reflecting "ways of characterizing an agent when  
we look at him from different standpoints, and with different  
questions in mind"(Toulmin, op.cit), then we can use this in an  
approach to structuring an explicit model of another.

A model such as that shown in the last chapter which collects  
the constructs derived from a repertory grid and/or implic-  
ations grid can be a focus for exploring how these constructs  
may represent or indicate the particular questions, perhaps  
previously implicit, a person has in mind when he seeks to  
explain and predict another in the context of his problem-  
situation. The exploration and representation of these  
questions, their relations with each other and with the  
person's salient goals and values, and of the theories with  
which the person answers them for himself, can become the  
content of interrelated arenas of enquiry as the building  
blocks of an explicit model of another.

Exactly what form the physical representation of such a  
model might take I do not yet know, although the point I  
start from is the extremely flexible cognitive mapping  
mode as a way of representing explanatory and predictive  
theories and which, as suggested in the last chapter may  
be developed to capture more fully the nature of predictive  
relationships. I would also expect the construction and  
analysis of models of others to be facilitated by the  
use of a computer. This is not only because it can assist  
with handling complex data but can reduce tedium and fatigue  
for those involved, within a flexible process which may  
vary from the 'quick and dirty' to that which is much more  
thorough and detailed. For these are elements in a conception



of an approach to assisting with explicit analysis of problem-significant others whereby models of them can be a record and source of complex data; to be drawn upon and explored in relation to any simulation of what they might do, and why, and with what consequences, in a particular situation. This would be, for example, in contrast to a game theoretic approach involving some relatively simple listing of the preferences and strategies of relevant players, without considerable attention to the theories which may underlie any assumptions about preferences and strategies. It is a conception in which:

"What is made explicit becomes a model which is intended to be a representation of an important part of a person's reality; the model may then be an artifact with which the client can conduct a dialogue; the dialogue is the process of knowing what is known, exploring the ramified consequences of what is known, and identifying enquiring strategies for a person changing his own subjective world." (Eden, Jones and Sims, 1979, p. 7)

Nor do I see the development of an approach to explicit modelling of problem-significant others as unrelated to the issue of the difficulties of role-taking. The process of dialogue may reveal what are seen to be important gaps in knowledge requiring the development of particular enquiry strategies. An approach which encourages analysis and reflection might lead a person to reflect on whether there are other reasons - for example, his own actions - leading to antagonism on the part of others. If the process of considering the 'questions' a person asks about others leads him to consider how some of his explanations and predictions derive from the question "Do I approve of or like this person?" then he might come to consider what

differences there might be in his predictions if his explanations were less evaluatively based.

More generally the discussion of this chapter about the limits upon and difficulties with accurate role-taking has some implications for the role of a consultant. I have suggested that both Robert and Janet were heavily evaluative of their problem-significant others, and Robert in particular saw his "own good or evil fortune to be the purpose of other people's actions", in ways which may have prevented them from always being very successful in their role taking efforts. I found it difficult to write about this aspect of their thinking about others because it seemed to involve the purporting of some superior knowledge on my part in a way that I find problematic. Thus I spent a great deal of time thinking about this aspect of the data and whether I was right, or had the right, to make some of the assertions I have made in this chapter.

Having come to the conclusions I did about aspects of their thinking about others the evidence for which, I suggest, is scattered throughout the preceding chapters it seemed dishonest not to make them explicit. It is also an aspect of construing others which seems entirely comprehensible and which most of us manifest at least some of the time with some others. In terms of practice it also seems to me to be part of a negotiative rather than purely empathetic approach to consultancy that a consultant not only can, but has some responsibility to offer his own ideas about his client's problem-significant others for discussion, if he has them;

and, if he believes it is appropriate and likely to be helpful, to ask the client to consider whether or not his evaluations of others and his absorption in his own problem is preventing him from "imaginatively constructing the attitudes of the other so as to anticipate the behavior of the other" as accurately as he himself would like. The client may reject the consultants interpretations, just as, of course, he may choose not to reveal at all his most sensitive and 'illegitimate' beliefs about others. . However, returning to a role for explicit modelling of problem-significant others, I suggest that in a collaborative client-consultant relationship the consultant is less likely to try and be coercive if he pays attention to learning about his client's complex interpersonal theories (including listening to those the client does not make explicit) ;and the client is more likely to be self-questioning, enquiring and reflective if he has a facility to explore, evaluate and debate with his own beliefs and knowledge.

PART FOUR:  
CONCLUSION.

## CHAPTER NINE:

### CONCLUSION

#### SUMMARY

The topic of this research was how individuals, when facing what they define as a complex policy problem, think about the other individuals or groups they see as significant in that problem. In approaching the topic there were certain questions I wished to explore, which also became a basis for structuring and communicating the complexity of the data with which I was confronted in the particular research setting.

The first of these, as a starting-point for a relatively unexplored area, was: "How can we theoretically understand the process by which some individuals and groups come to be defined as significant in a complex problem (and not others)?" It was answered in terms of a conception of problems as the personal constructions people place on events, where others are defined as significant because, within a personal framework of theories about the causes and consequences of events, their attitudes and actions are seen to currently or potentially have ramifications for problem-salient values.

Secondly, to add flesh to this general framework, both elaborating and illustrating it, I went on to consider: "Within the context of personal theorizing, on what particular bases, or for what reasons, might certain others be defined as significant in a complex problem?" Here two central theoretical categories or codes (Glaser, 1978) emerged in this data - theories about others who were significant because

they were seen to have power of various kinds to help or hinder the attainment of problem-objectives; and self-image values, leading to, and underlining the significance of, categorizations by Robert and Janet of allies and opponents and also the meaning and significance for Robert of the category "those I am doing this for" as audience others. Reflecting the differentiations and categorizations of Robert and Janet, a schema of categories of problem-significant others was developed.

Thirdly I examined the question: "How can we understand the process of theorizing about others which involves constructing and using some explanatory and predictive 'models' of others?" This led to an exploration of Robert and Janets' cognitions about others within a personal construct theory framework, in which certain key recurring constructs were described and self-image concerns were pivots in the process of construing unacceptable inconsistencies leading to the 'remodelling' of certain others. Finally, within a perspective of seeing Robert and Janet as attempting to construct an understanding of others in order to "predict and control", their processes of modelling and role-taking were examined as the seeking of answers to particular 'questions'.

#### WIDER RELEVANCE AND INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The process of analysis and conceptualization was one which attempted to offer some perspectives - a stance towards data - about some of the ways in which policy-makers might think about their problem-significant others; to suggest that what had been learned in this specific context and setting had some

relevance beyond it. Diesing (1972) has argued that:

"I would be inclined to point to the problem of the One and the Many as the essential problem of scientific method. Any scientific account of human society must somehow deal not only with the uniqueness of which human history and individual life histories consist, but also with the regularities of various sorts that appear in history. If the primary focus is on regularities, the unique inevitably shows up, first as something to be controlled, then as a source of ideas about new regularities, and finally as something to be intuitively reconstituted in the practical application of regularities. If the primary focus is on the particular history, regularities inevitably show up as concepts for describing particularities, as bases for controlling comparisons, and as generalizations to be achieved inductively." (p. 296, my emphasis)

In this research, the "primary focus" has been to learn about a "particular" history, the particular world of two people. Through an intensive, longitudinal involvement in their lives, I attempted to learn about their particular theories, concepts, categories and 'situated meanings' with which they constructed the significance of others in particular ways and for particular reasons and with particular consequences for the actions they took. At the same time, I continually asked whether, and at what points, their particular world met those of others in a process of comparison and conceptualization that could lead me both to reasonably argue that there was much in their defined reality that would be relevant and recognizable elsewhere; and also to reasonably point to (by the nature of the method this could not be 'proved') what could be treated as particular to them and their experiences and might indicate caution about generalization elsewhere.

Thus, for example, I discussed how Robert and Janet's constructions of powerful others, while involving categorizations that could be related to existing theory and

what many of us would find recognizable in our own organizational worlds, nevertheless did not always involve some precise fit with those pre-existing categories. And that they involved crucial subjectivities and particularities in terms of their cognitions about themselves and their abilities and how others were likely to evaluate them; their role expectations from particular experiences; the effect on their categorization of the nature of another's power of their personal feelings of liking and disliking; and the differences in their constructions depending on the standpoint from which they were viewing powerful others. I also described how they offered each other learning about powerful others, and the differences between them - for example, in the manifestations of their self-worth concerns as the definers of problems for them, as the 'pivots' in their reconstruing of others and in their capacities to 'subsume the construction systems' of others - was another aspect of individuality. At these and other points capturing the intersubjectivity of their reality was one important part of the sensitizing perspectives offered in this research:

"I take it that the empirical world of our discipline is the natural social world of our everyday experience. In this natural world every object of our consideration - whether a person, group, institution, practice or what not - has a distinctive, particular or unique character and lies in a context of a similar distinctive character. I think that it is this distinctive character of the empirical instance and of its setting which explains why our concepts are sensitizing and not definitive. In handling an empirical instance of a concept for purposes of study or analysis we do not, and apparently cannot meaningfully, confine our consideration of it strictly to what is covered by the abstract reference of the concept. We do not cleave aside what gives each instance its peculiar character and restrict ourselves to what it has in common with the other instances in the class covered by the concept. To the contrary, we seem forced to reach what is common by accepting and using what is distinctive to the given empirical instance. In



other words, what is common (i.e., what the concept refers to) is expressed in a distinctive manner in each empirical instance and can be got at only by accepting and working through the distinctive expression." (Blumer, 1970b, p. 92).

### COMPLEXITY

If capturing intersubjectivity was one important aspect of description and analysis in this research, another was the complexity of the data and its implications. Part of that complexity indeed comes from its intersubjectivity. That is, that we may expect, as a stance towards data, that there is likely to be diversity among different individuals about who is a problem-significant other, why, and with what consequences in their particular problem-situations and organizational environments. Thus the concepts we use and the content of expectations about their empirical instances that we bring to research and practice may best be seen as what Chin (1974) calls "a cumulation of selectively retained tentatives" (p. 26).

We also see complexity in the nature of theorizing about others, that body of understanding, explicit and implicit, which individuals build to infer about "intentions, attitudes, emotions, ideas, abilities, purposes, traits, thoughts, perceptions, memories - events that are inside the person and strictly psychological ... certain psychological qualities of relationships between persons, such as friendship, love, power and influence" and so on. (Tagiuri, 1969, p. 396). The inferences a person makes about another's psychological features are integrally derived from his own "intentions, attitudes, emotions, ideas, abilities, purposes, traits,

thoughts, perceptions memories". In this research we caught some glimpses of the complexities which we commonsensically know can surround the dynamics and intensities of interpersonal construing which affect the kinds of categorizations made and actions taken with respect to others, between people who do not always calculate the 'costs' and 'profits' of what they do nor indeed may always be fully aware of why they respond to others in certain ways.

One implication which was drawn from these kinds of complexities was that some policy-makers in some situations might find it useful and relevant to have tools to assist the explication and management of their interpersonal theorizing with which to use it more fully and self-consciously and effectively. It is the notion of explicit modelling for analysis of problem-significant others which would distinguish such activity not only from that of traditional policy analysis but also from most O.D. practice which typically does not include explicit modelling methods in its repertoire of techniques. And, of course, a consultant who might wish to be engaged in helping his clients with this kind of analysis will then be confronted with further complexities in terms of the norms and expectations surrounding the nature of policy analysis, the 'illegitimacy' of revealing certain data about others and the particular illegitimacy of explicitly recording and representing it.

Looking at complexity from a slightly different angle, it is also found in the breadth of theory relevant to the topic. In attempting to answer the questions outlined above and

structure the communication of the findings in terms of them, there was no small amount of repetition and overlap. I was also led to wander over a wide range of theory and concepts. One of the notable, if unsurprising, features of much of current social-psychological theory is the degree of 'separatism' that is manifest. This has led Hinde (1981) to argue that:

"... many students of interpersonal relationships, starting from a particular theoretical position, have attempted only to establish the effectiveness of their own approach. This has involved either attempts to establish the range of applicability of one paradigm ... or to pit one theory or paradigm against its rivals ... Largely (though not by any means completely) lacking have been attempts to integrate them. Yet in the study of interpersonal relationships the need for integration is of special importance. Relationships have both behavioural and affective/cognitive aspects; they depend on interactions yet involve more than interactions; their parts must be studied but so must the whole; they must be related to the personalities of the participants and the social context in which they exist. Thus understanding of their dynamics requires diverse concepts, and an integrated subsience of relationships demands that the relationships between those concepts be established." (p. 6)

I was not attempting here to develop a "subsience of relationships" and was inevitably making choices about some perspectives in preference to others. However, there was a degree of theoretical eclecticism which lacked the elegance of some self-contained paradigm or metaphor but was an attempt to do some justice to the complexity and inelegance of the data.

#### A CORE CATEGORY

One way of illustrating the overlaps and interlinkages in findings and analysis is through looking at any categories or concepts that appear in and relate different aspects of

the data being examined - "core" in the sense used by Glaser (1978) ... "It must be central, that is related to as many other categories as possible ... it must re-occur frequently in the data..." (p. 95). In this research self-cognitions and values emerged as core in this sense.

i/ Robert and Janet's beliefs about their own abilities and social position, and beliefs about how others would and did evaluate them were crucial in their constructions of power. They believed that others were unlikely to "listen" to them and thus they sought help from "those who will make people listen to us". Their feelings of powerlessness linked to their lack of confidence in their own abilities to plan and tackle their issue led them to feel dependent on those whom they distrusted and disliked but felt were "indispensable" for their knowledge and contacts. This lack of self-confidence also underpinned their anxiety about those whom they thought could suborn their support by leading others relatively easily to redefine them. The concept of "listening" was central to their conception of the meaning of respect power as 'being listened to and given weight' of which one variant was the possession of the wisdom and competence they believed they lacked.

ii/ That others should value them, should "listen" rather than "lecture" and "like us" rather than be "dubious about us" was a crucial part of their framework for learning about others and making sense of their actions and attitudes with respect to them.

iii/ They sought to ally themselves with those whom they saw as offering support to their salient role-identities and construed rejection of them caused them significant problems,

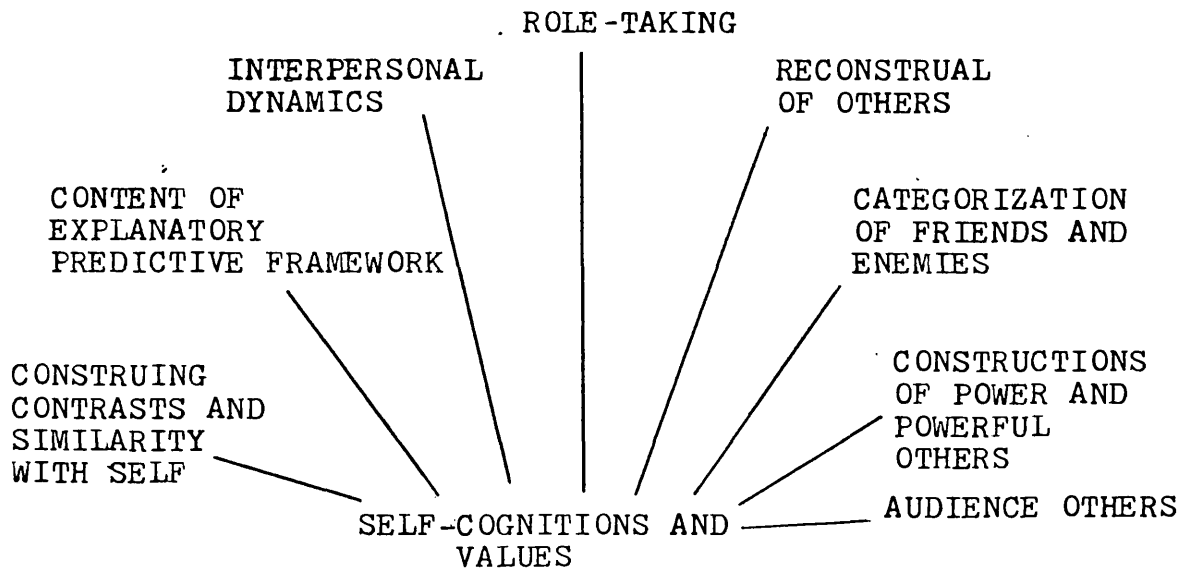
being significantly implicated in the categorization of opponents to help the kids, including the nature of their power.

iv/Self-image concerns were central pivots in their reconstrual of others.

v/ 'Self as the central figure' exacerbated the difficulties of accurate role-taking.

vi/Robert and Janet's interpersonal construing was often explicitly in terms of others' contrast and similarity to themselves.

vii/A category of problem-significant others for Robert comprised those he saw as audiences for his performance as a leader of the black community.



A diagrammatic representation of the above relationships

#### DISCIPLINED EXPLICATION AND ANALYSIS

Of course a great deal of Robert and Janet's thinking about their problem-significant others seems common-sensically, if not trivially obvious, including its intersubjectivity, its complexity and the centrality of self-cognitions.

At the same time, the particular research topic in its particular context of complex policy problems is a relatively unexplored area, about which many of us who work in and attempt to understand organizational life would have much to say in relation to our own experiences but which has not drawn a significant body of systematically researched and described empirical studies. This is probably partly because the kind of data that is involved is at a level of sensitivity which means that it tends to be learned about in a relatively anecdotal way or implicitly in the form of "I know that you know ... that I know ..." and so on. These anecdotes and implicit awarenesses are a crucial bedrock of data and theorizing but for some at least there may be a significant step from using these to reflecting on them in the light of carefully constructed research which has some credibility because it has gone beyond perhaps more sporadically and intuitively gained understanding in terms of systematic explication and analysis.

The reflection that this research may lead to for some could involve either or both of the following. Firstly it may offer some concepts and ideas with which to interpret and integrate other particular data, perhaps, to take one example, to become more aware than before about the values, likes and dislikes and self-cognitions underlying attributions of power - not because these things were not known, but because they were not thought about in an explicit way. Secondly, within an approach which sees that sensitizing concepts should not lack rich empirical content, this research may have elaborated for some a picture of a particular instance of a broad, often

ambiguous concept. To take another example, while we may all be well aware that human beings 'tend to protect their identity and feelings of self-worth' this research has attempted to describe in some detail the particular way this phenomenon was manifest in this setting and this research context of people considering a complex policy problem. These two aspects of research, conceptualization which builds bridges from, but is also embedded in, rich explication of data, which has been attempted here, are argued for by Lofland (1976) as follows:

"... abstractions and qualitative data coexist as a whole. Each depends on the other for enlightenment and meaning. Taken separately, the abstractions and data may have slight interest or merit. The abstractions are likely to be dull because the reader has an inadequate conception of the concrete, empirical reality to which they might refer. The qualitative data alone are dull because the reader has little notion of generic patterns involved save those he may be imposing. But interpenetration through minute and continual alternation between abstraction and episodes makes the whole more than the parts". (p. 65).

There is of course no single body of cohesive theory which we can call social science but a large number of people who have different perspectives and concerns and 'prior schemes'.

Chin (op. cit) describes how:

"For me, I adopt an evolutionary perspective in knowledge building, that is, knowledge is a cumulation of selectively retained tentatives.

The implication of this position is that we do not strive for a finality of answer in applied behavioral science and, operationally, a once-and-for-all crucial experiment. We do strive for a patient and constantly alert evaluation of existing knowledge and current practices, holding on to what we have judged to be of "value" and yet seeing what we are holding on to as nothing more than a set of selectively retained tentatives." (p. 26)

Chin's notion of "selectively retained tentatives" seems

relevant not merely because it reflects the position taken here about the nature of any outcomes of this research, including their limits. It also seems relevant in a different way to that which is his emphasis. In this thesis there are a number of comments and ideas, some more developed than others, none of them offering a 'major new insight', but among those who might read it, each with their own existing frameworks and interests, one or two of those comments and ideas may be selectively garnered as interesting enough to put into their current collection of "selectively retained tentatives" and/or pursue in further research. Perhaps most important to me is that some of those who write about and seek to help with processes of problem-solving and policy analysis, within a science-rational perspective of objectivities and apolitical consensus, might be led to consider that the subjectivities, internal politics, interpersonal conflicts and 'other-definitions' which have been discussed in this research are worth paying more explicit attention to as likely to be central features of problem-construction - not because of this data alone but because this data has led to a reevaluation of other data.

#### THEORY FOR PRACTICE

Diesing (op. cit) argues that:

"The payoff of science is practice. The payoff of case study methods is the particular kind of practice they make possible. Each of the major social science methods produces its own special kind of knowledge, and each kind of knowledge is especially adapted to a certain kind of practical use ... The kind of knowledge of a living system that case study methods provide is essentially suited to enabling a person to work within the system, to become an active participant in its self-development. The participant observer and the clinician work their way into the system they are studying and try to become



an active part of it in order to understand it from the inside." (pp. 259-264).

This research has been quite deliberately oriented to trying to contribute to "a special kind of knowledge ... adapted to a certain kind of use", that is to the understanding and use of this understanding to assist with the significant-other content of complex policy problems. For example, this research, when related to that which he knows already, may lead a policy analyst to believe that it is worth attempting to acquire data about any problem-significant others belonging to his clients in a more self-conscious way than he may have done before. He may choose to do this simply by 'listening' more closely to the content and significance of any data that a client reveals about others. Or, he may consider pursuing more explicit enquiry within an approach to problem-helping used in this research and elsewhere which involves paying considerable attention to learning about and modelling a client's problem-construction as the bringing to bear of a personal framework of beliefs and values about the nature, causes, consequences and significance of events, including those centred on the attitudes and actions of others.

He may consider whether or not any of the categories of problem-significant others developed in this research seem to be relevant to his clients' situations as a basis for dialogue, or whether the other analyses within it are at all useful as an interpretative stance towards the data with which he is confronted in the accounts and actions of his clients. What is being suggested here is not that the

content of this research is likely to be 'news' to many good consultants, but rather that among those who have previously operated within a traditional 'science-rational' apolitical mode of analysis, it may lead them to reassess what is relevant and important to pay attention to and work with. Furthermore if a policy analyst comes to believe that there can be a useful and relevant role, in at least some situations, for explicit modelling of his clients' problem-significant others, he may wish to build differently on his own particular knowledge and experience or he may be interested to pick up and develop, with that knowledge, some of the embryonic ideas about possible future directions discussed in this thesis.

Finally, although I have concentrated on the practice of consultants, it would be disappointing if some policy-makers in some organizations did not find among the findings and analysis in this research at least one or two ideas that could offer them a different awareness with which to reflect on their own thinking about other problem-significant others, including ways in which those others might think about himself as one significant other.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH

It would be both difficult and inappropriate to attempt to make some definitive statements about where research on this topic might go, carried out as it would be by different individuals, with particular purposes, contexts, conceptual frameworks. The following, therefore, are just a few briefly sketched ideas that may be of interest and relevance to some.

A Style for Research: In this research a particular methodology was adopted, for the reasons outlined in Chapter Two. If a person comes to be interested in this topic and he has not employed action research as a method before, he may consider that the kind of data involved is most likely to be available to him if he can negotiate an action research role with research participants where they can see some relevance to themselves of articulating to him theories about their complex problems and problem-significant others in their richness, complexity and potential illegitimacy. This would include considering how he might negotiate an action research help-role as facilitator rather than expert problem-solver.

Similar Contexts: In the development of theory Diesing suggests that "The basic solution is to move from the particular to the general and back again in small steps rather than in one grand jump. One first compares one's case with a similar case, then to another and then to one somewhat more different." (p. 183). Thus somebody might be interested to test the categories and analysis of this research by seeing whether they appeared to help him with understanding another similar situation. Although we could expect that this second situation would result in some differences and the elaboration of further categories and analysis, if none of those developed in this research held up as of use, then there would importantly need to be a reassessment of any claims to wider generality. What the definition of similarity would be is, of course, not at all straightforward, not only because of

the distinctive character of those whose world is being studied but also because of the uniqueness of the researcher. However, a researcher might wish to relate to the features of this research not only in terms of the nature of the policy problem being tackled, but as taking place in the context of voluntary action with two people, a sub-set of a larger group, who had not previously had any extended experience of attempting to effect change through voluntary action.

Different contexts: Another way of approaching the development of theory in this area, which is less rigorous than the controlled comparison method advocated by Diesing, is to say that what is needed is simply more cases with which to build a rich body of data and analysis for comparison, discussion and negotiated interpretation amongst those who make their own choices about what to compare with what, and why. The comparisons and cases would be developed by researchers with different contexts, opportunities for action, interpretive frameworks, and values not only about whose world they wish to explore, but also those whom they wish to help through action research. My own immediate interest is to attempt to test, refine, and add to the findings and analysis of this research within contexts different in at least two ways.

Firstly, I am interested in the situation of policy-makers in more traditional organizational settings who are experienced and skilled in the politics of their world

and regard themselves as having power to influence events. Lofland (1976) has argued that a great deal of social science is carried out in what he calls "marginal settings" among people who lack significant power; firstly because they are those who are easiest to gain access to, and secondly because they are those whom the values of researchers lead them to be most sympathetic to. My own values would incline me in a similar direction. but they also suggest that it seems crucially important to learn more about the worlds and definitions of those who do have power to affect the lives of others, (and have presumably acquired and retained power at least partly by being successful in their prediction and control of others). Not least of the learning is likely to be about the problems of obtaining, and writing about, data from people who have also presumably acquired and retained power partly by being circumspect about what they reveal, to whom, and why.

Secondly, a great many problems in organizations are handled by teams. If research in this topic is to develop its "own special kind of knowledge ... adapted to a certain kind of use", of helping with the analysis of the significant other content of complex policy problems, then it also seems important to learn about settings comprising teams larger than two. A team context is also likely to involve particular complexities and learning to do with what team members might (and might not) reveal to a researcher whom they know will be talking to other team members; what they might reveal to a researcher on an individual basis but

not publicly declare within the team as a whole; and thus how any techniques and approaches to help with the explicit analysis and negotiation of knowledge about problem-significant others requires to, and might, address these kinds of complexities.

Greater depth: In attempting to cover some breadth, rather than concentrate on a particular aspect of the data, there was an inevitable cost to depth of analysis in certain areas in this research, and I would expect that there are any number of aspects within it which other researchers would select as requiring more detailed enquiry. The following are some of interest to me.

Firstly, I had entered this research with the intention of exploring how individuals think about both individuals and groups as significant others. In the event, however, this thesis has concentrated primarily on Robert and Janet's thinking about specific individuals. This reflected the dominance in their thinking. There were, nevertheless, some problem-significant others who were labelled groups and although I did look at this particular feature of their thinking, I did not pursue it in great depth. Insofar as I did, it involved processes of aggregation and typification, including generalization from experiences of particular individuals seen as typified representatives of groups. We would expect that at least some policy makers do have group problem-significant others, and the cognitive process by which a person constructs explanatory and predictive theory about an

aggregate seems to be a potentially useful arena of enquiry.

Another aspect of the data which emerged but which I did not pursue was that to do with processes of constructing anticipatory models of those about whom there was little existing data - for example, about those within certain organizations whom Robert and Janet wished to approach for help and support. We would expect that there are occasions when policy-makers have one or more problem-significant others about whom they have little existing data and are unlikely to be able to acquire much - as, for example, when thinking about individuals in some 'rival' organization or about that organization as an aggregate. Thus how to understand and help with interpersonal theorizing in this situation is another potentially relevant aspect of the topic.

The above would be part of an attempt to achieve a considerably more developed understanding of explanatory and predictive cognition about others than was achieved here. That is about such areas as: the processes of prediction and the relative strengths of inferential relationships; the nature and operation of hierarchical subsystems of constructs as a way of managing the complexity of interpersonal construing; and indeed more generally about the "varied modes of psychological explanations applicable on different levels and different situations ... our alternative ways of characterizing an agent, when we look at

him from different standpoints and with different questions in mind;" (Toulmin, 1969, pp.95-96) It would include, in the context of networks of relationships, a fuller understanding of the ways in which a person constructs an understanding of his problem-significant others' own 'other-definitions'.

I would expect that investigating these kinds of theoretical issues is likely to be importantly developed in, as well as leading to, the use of techniques and approaches to assist with the explication and analysis of significant others. For if a person who is attempting to tackle a complex problem is to be interested in exploring his thinking in this detail (and not as a favour to the researcher who may then wonder at the data he is getting), then it is likely that he will have to believe, and be given some evidence, that it is worthwhile for him to do so in terms of increasing the effectiveness of his problem-solving efforts.



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